



PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT 07-21-14 | WHERE HISTORY MEETS OPPORTUNITY |
**SUMMARY
PLAN**

City of Richmond

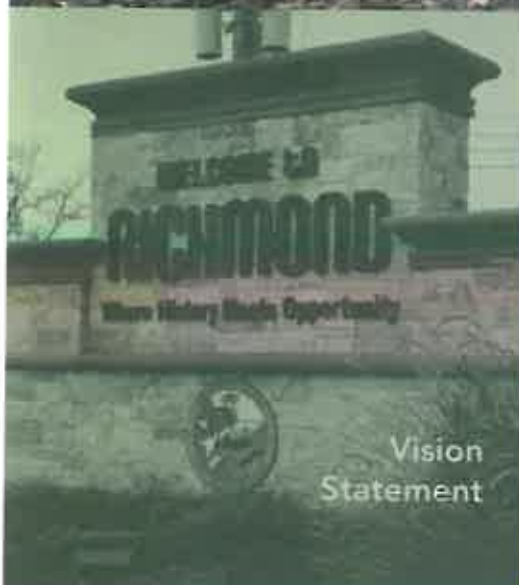
COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN



What is a Comprehensive Master Plan?

A comprehensive master plan is a community guidebook that specifies policy, program, and project initiatives for a city and its surrounding planning area. It reflects the community's values and traditions, while simultaneously exploring opportunities and best practices for growth, redevelopment, and enhancement for the next 20 years.

The formation of this plan occurred at a significant crossroads in Richmond's history. One year prior to plan adoption, the City voted to approve a Home Rule Charter and form a Planning and Zoning Commission. Those tools expanded the City's ability to influence growth and provide for the needs of Richmond citizens.



Vision Statement

Great opportunities and significant challenges are ahead. The goals of the City Commission are to:

- Encourage, promote, and welcome expanding residential and business growth and development;
- Provide safe, secure, family-oriented communities;
- Influence, foster, and maintain the interest of safety;
- Protect and preserve well-known historic sites and memorabilia; and
- Provide a healthy business and economic atmosphere.

It is our belief that each resident and business is of the utmost importance and deserves the very best that taxpayer dollars can provide in order to develop and maintain a city that is financially secure and one in which we can all be proud.

STRATEGIC TOOLBOX

The City adopted its first *Comprehensive Master Plan* in 1965. Nearly 50 years later, this plan builds on the community's legacy by celebrating the past, capitalizing on the present, and planning for the future.

A

Use annexation as a strategic growth tool to expand Richmond's population and tax base.

B

Leverage public investments to enhance the existing community and promote growth.

C

Strengthen transportation connections and increase choices between ways to travel.

D

Elevate the appearance, quality, and compatibility of development.

E

Create mixed-use activity centers that serve as community destinations.

F

Rehabilitate and preserve Richmond's existing neighborhoods and community assets.

G

Partner with existing local businesses to assist in their success and improve access to resources.

H

Diversify Richmond's business and employer mix through innovation and strategic recruitment.

I

Enhance and preserve Richmond's natural amenities.

J

Strengthen the awareness and image of Richmond throughout the region.



Plan Objectives

- Establish a community-supported vision that guides future growth and enhancement of the community;
- Garner participation and support of residents and employees;
- Strengthen public and private partnerships between intergovernmental, institutional, and private-sector leaders;
- Provide greater predictability for residents, landowners, developers, and potential investors;
- Influence the regulatory environment to ensure community values and desired outcomes are realistic and enforceable;
- Fulfill the statutory requirements necessary to establish land use controls and management strategies; and
- Define a strategic implementation program for directing annual work programs and prioritizing capital improvement projects

How was the Plan Developed?

This plan is the result of a seven-month planning process designed to garner “early and ongoing” participation. On a monthly basis, the project team met with a 16-member advisory committee to provide strategic direction, review interim plan deliverables, and prioritize key issues and recommendations. Communitywide events were held at varying times and convenient locations to optimize input and ensure broad participation.

Advisory Committee Workshops

The 17-member Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC), including the Mayor and City Commissioners, provided interim feedback at important project milestones. Participants represented a diversity of community interests and areas of professional expertise. The group met six times in workshop settings to engage in visioning, mapping, ranking, and discussion exercises. Topics included land use, infrastructure, growth capacity, economic development, and Downtown revitalization.

Listening Sessions

Listening sessions were useful for identifying preliminary issues and opportunities at the beginning of the plan development process. Approximately 50 community stakeholders participated in one of four small group discussions. These meetings were held at various times and locations convenient to stakeholders, including one listening session located at OakBend Medical Center.



Please rank Richmond's top two “most beneficial” implementation strategies.

1. This collection as a strategic growth tool to develop Richmond's capabilities and the region
2. Develop public-private partnerships to enhance the existing community and economic growth
3. Increase transportation connections and improve shared infrastructure to travel
4. Enhance the appearance, quality, and living ability of development
5. Create mixed-use activity centers that serve all community needs
6. Revitalize and preserve Richmond's existing neighborhoods and community assets
7. Partner with existing local businesses to attract new business and improve access to facilities
8. Develop Richmond's history and improve the through innovation and design
9. Enhance and preserve Richmond's natural resources
10. Strengthen the awareness and image of Richmond



24/7 DIALOGUE

www.richmondmasterplan.com

The Online Discussion Forum generated thoughtful responses that were integrated into the findings and recommendations of this plan.

Online Discussion Forum

As part of the comprehensive planning process, the City hosted an Online Discussion Forum to identify community needs and innovative approaches to improve Richmond's prosperity and quality of life. This ongoing, "24/7" dialogue helped to guide the plan's findings and recommendations by soliciting input from citizens that do not typically attend or voice opinions at traditional public meetings. More than 150 citizens actively participated on the website. This forum also complemented other engagement activities by providing an outlet to continue ongoing conversations. The website was organized as a series of question prompts introduced at various points in the planning process.



"Implementation of the plan will neither be easy nor automatic. It will require a strong communitywide effort, led by a group of public-spirited citizens who can devote enough of their time to the program to keep it moving."

1965 Richmond Comprehensive Plan

Roles and Responsibilities



City Commission

As the leader of plan implementation, the key responsibilities of the City Commission are to decide and establish priorities, set timeframes by which each action will be initiated and completed, and determine the budget to be made available for implementation efforts. In conjunction with the Mayor, the City Commissioners must also ensure effective coordination among the various groups that are responsible for carrying out the plan's recommendations.



Planning and Zoning Commission

The Planning and Zoning Commission makes recommendations to the City Commission based on plan principles. The Commission should prepare an Annual Progress Report to ensure plan relevance.



City Staff

City staff manages the day-to-day implementation of the plan. In particular, City staff is responsible for supporting the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Commission.



How will the plan stay updated?

The Comprehensive Master Plan is meant to be a flexible document allowing for adjustment to political, economic, physical, technological, and social conditions, and other unforeseen circumstances that may influence and change the priorities and fiscal outlook of the community. To ensure that it continues to reflect the overall goals of the community and remains relevant and resourceful over time, the plan must be revisited on a regular basis to confirm that the plan elements are still on point and the associated goals, policies, and action statements are still appropriate.

Annual Progress Report

Once fully established in the coming years, the Planning and Zoning Commission, with the assistance of staff, should prepare an annual progress report for presentation to the Mayor and City Commission. This ensures that the plan is consistently reviewed and that any needed modifications or clarifications are identified for the bi-annual minor plan amendment process. Ongoing monitoring of consistency between the plan and the City's implementing regulations should be an essential part of this effort.

Biennial Amendment Process

Plan amendments should occur on at least a biennial (every two year) basis, allowing for proposed changes to be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effect may be understood. When considering a plan amendment, the City should ensure the proposed amendment is consistent with the goals and policies set forth in the plan regarding character protection, development compatibility, infrastructure availability, and other community priorities. Careful consideration should also be given to guard against site-specific plan changes that could negatively impact adjacent areas and uses or detract from the overall character of the area. Factors that should be considered in deciding on a proposed plan amendment include:

Five-Year Update / Evaluation and Appraisal Report

An evaluation and appraisal report should be prepared every five years. This report should be prepared by City staff with input from various City departments, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and other City boards and commissions. The report process involves evaluating the existing plan and assessing how successful it has been in achieving the community's goals. The purpose of the report is to identify the successes and shortcomings of the plan, look at what has changed over the last five years, and make recommendations on how the plan should be modified in light of those changes.

Types of Amendments

Two types of revisions to the Comprehensive Master Plan may occur: (1) minor amendments and (2) major updates:

Minor Amendments

This type of amendment may be proposed at any time, such as specific adjustments to the Future Land Use Plan related to particular land development applications or public improvement projects. Minor amendments can be addressed by the City in short order or, if not pressing, may be documented and compiled for a more holistic evaluation through an annual plan review process. For example, this is how and when the results of another specialized plan or study may be incorporated into relevant sections of the plan.

Major Updates

More significant plan modifications and updates should occur no more than every five years. Major updates involve reviewing the base conditions and anticipated growth trends; re-evaluating the policies and recommendations of the plan—and formulating new ones as necessary; and adding, revising, or removing action statements in the plan based on implementation progress.

At the conclusion of the comprehensive planning process, community stakeholders ranked plan priorities at an advisory committee workshop and on the plan's Online Discussion Forum.

Richmond's Top Priority

A Use annexation as a strategic growth tool to expand Richmond's population and tax base.

Key Recommendations

- Fiscal impact model to influence growth decisions
- Utility infrastructure provision and extension policies
- Voluntary annexations and ETJ agreements

Other Considerations

- Coordination between the Capital Improvements Program, Future Land Use Plan, and Annexation Program
- Protection of annexation areas not targeted for near-term growth
- Intergovernmental coordination for annexation and ETJ boundaries

* Asterisk indicates a crossover recommendation
✓ Check mark indicates a top-ranked priority.

B Leverage public investments to enhance the existing community and promote growth.

Key Recommendations

- Joint-funded project initiatives and shared-use facilities
- Incremental infrastructure investments that can expand with growth
- Landscape beautification and screening investments with major infrastructure projects

Other Considerations

- *Recruitment of mixed-use development opportunities at major civic destinations
- Regional detention and recreation amenities
- Improved GIS inventory of City and special district facilities
- Strengthened ties between industry and education
- Ongoing monitoring of impact fees to ensure regional competitiveness and proportional cost of impact

C Strengthen transportation connections and increase choices between ways to travel.

Key Recommendations

- Regional advocacy for transportation funding and policy formation
- Mobility and connectivity updates to land development regulations and street design standards
- Coordinated City-County thoroughfare planning
- Sidewalk, bike lane, and trail planning with rights-of-way protections
- Transit feasibility study to explore local circulator

Other Considerations

- Traffic demand management system
- Incorporation of a street connectivity index into the Subdivision Regulations
- Localized traffic calming and travel speed studies
- Regional coordination with railroads to identify viability of an alternative track that bypasses Richmond

D Elevate the appearance, quality, and competitiveness of development.

Key Recommendations

- Updated land development regulations
- Streamlined development review process

Other Considerations

- *Public investments at key community gateways
- *Recruitment of high-quality land developers
- Relationship between WFBMD guidelines and the City's land development regulations
- Enhanced requirements of development agreements
- Advocacy program to aid in code compliance (e.g., weeds, debris, junk vehicles)
- Façade improvement grant program for commercial properties
- Requirement of traffic impact analyses for major developments

E Create mixed-use activity centers that serve as community destinations.

Key Recommendations

- Recruitment of high-quality land developers
- Cost-benefit analysis of railroad quiet zones
- Weekend and nightlife programming
- Mixed-use development at major civic destinations
- Strategic corridor planning

Other Considerations

- *Collaborative marketing of Richmond's assets
- *Transit feasibility study to explore local circulator
- *Downtown redevelopment plan
- New financing mechanisms to support redevelopment efforts

Comprehensive Master Plan Priorities

- Enhanced streetscape amenities and expanded parking options in Downtown
- Formal expansion of the Richmond Historic District to align with the Future Land Use Plan
- Assistance with conversion of second-story floors in Downtown

F

Rehabilitate and preserve Richmond's existing neighborhoods and community assets.

Key Recommendations

- Neighborhood planning and small-scale improvement projects
- Residential street and sidewalk revitalization program
- Coordination of historic preservation guidelines and updated land development regulations

Other Considerations

- *Sidewalk, bike lane, and trail planning with rights-of-way protections
- Partnerships with churches, civic organizations, schools, and businesses in neighborhood improvement and revitalization efforts
- Potential relocation and expansion of the Fort Bend Museum and other historic assets
- Education and outreach for homeowner rehabilitation and financing
- Infill incentives (e.g., fee waivers, tax abatements) and development standards
- Seasonal "Clean Up" events or "Neighborhood Pride" days focusing on beautification

G

Partner with existing local businesses to assist in their success and improve access to resources.

Key Recommendations

- Strengthened ties between education and industry
- Downtown redevelopment plan
- Online library of business funding and technical assistance resources
- Increased capacity of business organizations

Other Considerations

- *Collaborative marketing and branding of Richmond's assets
- *Updated land development regulations
- *Transit feasibility study to explore local circulator
- Assistance with conversion of second-story floors in Downtown
- Formation of task force to assess the need for business assistance programs
- "Shop Local" programs
- Quarterly or semi-annual meetings with largest employers to coordinate initiatives

H

Diversify Richmond's business and employer mix through innovation and strategic recruitment.

Key Recommendations

- Hotel recruitment
- Shovel-ready business and industrial park
- Business incubator and accelerator program
- Enhanced website design and increased availability of City information

Other Considerations

- *Incremental infrastructure investments that can expand with growth
- *Streamlined development review process
- *Updated land development regulations
- *Strengthened ties between education and industry
- Housing accommodations in support of targeted professions

I

Enhance and preserve Richmond's natural amenities.

Key Recommendations

- Low-impact development standards
- Recreational and visual access to the Brazos River
- Enhanced local and regional park system

Other Considerations

- *Joint-funded project initiatives and shared-use facilities
- *Sidewalk, bike lane, and trail planning with rights-of-way protections
- *Landscape beautification and screening investments with major infrastructure projects
- Use of Future Land Use Plan as guideline to protect rural areas and natural amenities
- "Green building" best practice guidelines
- Formation of donor program to enhance park and downtown amenities

J

Strengthen the awareness and image of Richmond throughout the region.

Key Recommendations

- Collaborative marketing and branding of Richmond's assets
- Intergovernmental advocacy and coordination
- Public investments at Richmond's key community gateways

Other Considerations

- *Enhanced website design and increased availability of City information
- *Recruitment of high-quality land developers
- *Weekend and nightlife programming
- Comprehensive wayfinding study
- Historic architecture as unique regional asset for arts and entertainment district

What is the Plan's Legal Foundation?

In 2013, Richmond citizens adopted a Home Rule Charter. It expanded the City's annexation authority and initiated this long-range planning process. The City is required to adopt a comprehensive master plan in compliance with its Home Rule Charter. Texas municipalities are not required by state government to prepare and maintain a comprehensive master plan, unlike some other states. However, Section 213 of the Texas Local Government Code allows municipalities to adopt such a plan for the purposes of encouraging sound development practices and promoting public health, safety, and welfare. Texas cities have the ability to define the content and design of their plan, resulting in a long-range blueprint that can be customized to meet the needs and planning capacity of each community.



There are five general methods for plan implementation:

Capital Improvements Programming

The capital improvements program, or "CIP," is a multi-year plan that identifies budgeted capital projects, including street infrastructure; water, wastewater, and drainage facilities; parks, trails, and recreation facility construction and upgrades; construction of public buildings; and purchase of major equipment. Identifying and budgeting for major capital improvements will be essential to implementing this plan. Decisions regarding the prioritization of proposed capital improvements should consult the policy and management directives of this plan.

Development Regulations, Standards, Policies, and Procedures

Given that private investment decisions account for a vast majority of the City's physical form, land development regulations and engineering standards are fundamental for plan implementation. Consequently, zoning and subdivision regulations and associated development criteria and technical engineering standards are the basic keys to ensuring that the form, character, and quality of development reflect the City's planning objectives. These codes should reflect the community's desire for quality development outcomes while recognizing economic factors. They should not delay or interfere unnecessarily with appropriate new development or redevelopment that is consistent with plan principles and directives.

Special Projects, Programs, and Initiatives

Special projects and initiatives is another broad category of implementation measures. These may include initiating or adjusting City programs; expanding citizen participation programs; providing training; and other types of special projects.

Specific Plans and Studies

There are a number of areas where additional planning work is recommended at a "finer grain" level of detail than is appropriate for comprehensive planning purposes. As such, some parts of this plan will be implemented only after some additional planning or special study.

Coordination and Partnerships

Most community initiatives identified in this plan cannot be accomplished by City government on its own. They may require direct coordination, intergovernmental agreements, or funding support from other public entities or levels of government. Additionally, the unique role of private and non-profit partners to advance the community's action agenda has been a valuable part of this process and should not be underestimated in the implementation stages. This may occur through cooperative efforts; volunteer activities, and in-kind services (which can count toward the local match requirements for various grant opportunities), and public/private financing of community improvements.



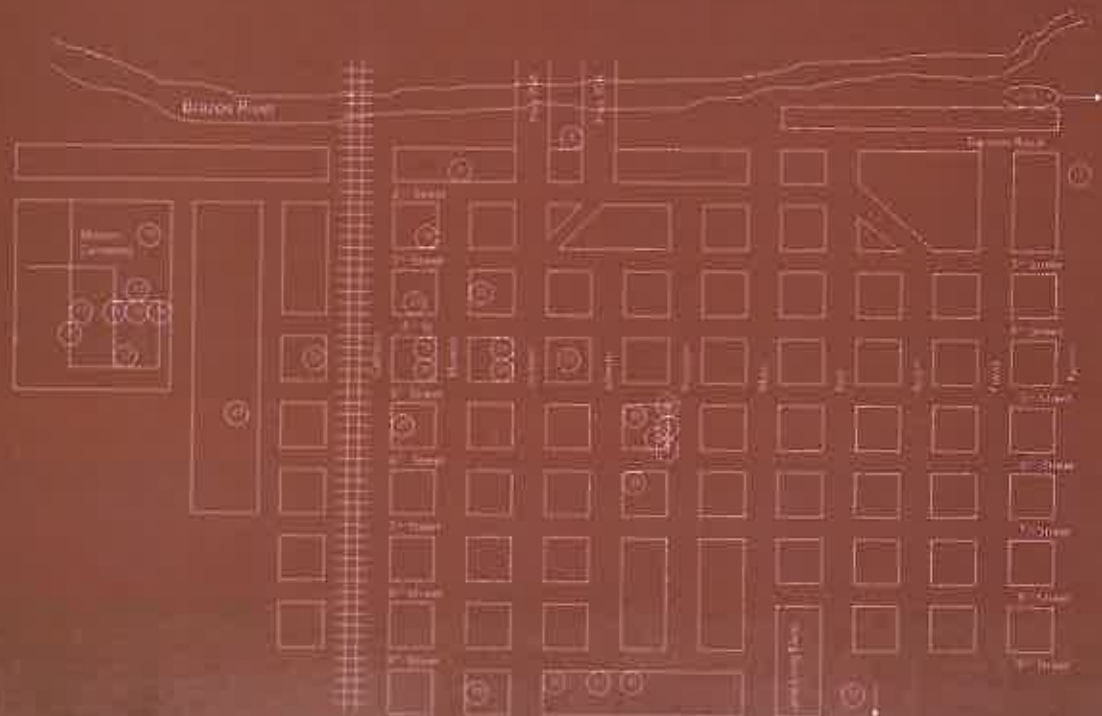
"Our history is a critical part of the history of the South and Texas. We have many opportunities that can be developed with some effort. We have a diverse mix of talented citizens concerned about the success of our City."

Early Community History

- 1820s** A group of 12 to 15 men camped in the vicinity of the present city and were soon followed by other members of Stephen F. Austin's "Old Three Hundred." A log fort built at the bend in the Brazos River became the nucleus of a settlement, which came to be known as Fort Bend, or the "Fort Settlement."
- 1830s** The town of Richmond was established by Robert Eden Handy and his business partner, William Lusk. The town of Richmond was incorporated by the Republic of Texas in May 1837. Later that year, Fort Bend County was established, and Richmond became its seat of government.
- 1850s** The Buffalo Bayou, Brazos, and Colorado Railway extended its tracks into the town. Richmond served as a shipping and market center for the area's cotton plantations.
- 1880s** The town was the site of the "Battle of Richmond," a violent feud over post-Reconstruction political control culminating in the Jaybird-Woodpecker War.
- 1920s** Richmond's economy remained dependent on agriculture until the 1920s, when oil production began in the county.
- 1930s** Sidewalks were extended through much of the town, and a large municipal pool was built. Richmond's citizens approved a bond package that funded a number of other civic improvements, including a new city hall, modern water system, and new fire-fighting equipment.
- 1940s** People began moving to the Richmond-Rosenberg area to commute to jobs in Houston. The community's population grew rapidly, rising from 2,026 in 1950 to 9,692 by 1980.

Historical Tour of Richmond

1. City of Richmond Historical Marker
2. Fort Bend County Museum Association
3. Long Smith Cottage
4. Deaf Smith Marker
5. Congressman John M. Moore House
6. Pembroke-Dyer House
7. Thomas Blakely Winston House
8. Pearson-Winston House
9. Darston House
10. Farmer House
11. McFarlane House
12. Fort Bend County Courthouse
13. St. John's United Methodist Church
14. Crawford Memorial Park
15. Site of First County Courthouse
16. Richmond General Mercantile Building
17. Site of Carry Nation's National Hotel
18. Jane Long's Boarding House Marker
19. Jay Bird/Woodpecker Monument
20. Courthouse Square Marker
21. Sunset Saloon Building
22. Decker Park
23. 1896 County Jail (Police Department)
24. Morton Cemetery
25. McNabb Marker
26. William Kinchen Davis Grave
27. Robert Gillespie Grave
28. Robert J. Calder Grave
29. Mirabeau B. Lamar Grave
30. Jane Long Grave
31. Thomas Jefferson Smith Grave
32. Rich House
33. Lamar-Calder House
34. Mirabeau B. Lamar Homesite Marker
35. Dyer Cemetery and Wily Martin Grave
36. Calvary Episcopal Church Historical Marker



A map of the Richmond, Texas area. The city of Richmond is highlighted in yellow. Surrounding areas are labeled as the trade area. Major highways like I-10, I-45, and I-29 are shown. Various neighborhoods and landmarks are labeled, including Katy, Cinco Ranch, Houston, Mission Bend, Four Corners, Meadows Place, Sugar Land, The Woodlands, Spring Branch, and others. The map also shows the surrounding counties: Waller, Fort Bend, Austin, Harris, and Wharton.

City of Richmond

11,807 2013 Population
\$41,957 Median Household Income
32.1 Median Age

Trade Area

145,743 2011 Population
\$66,589 Median Household Income
35.3 Median Age

Source: Retail Gap Analysis 2011

Background Context

Planning is the process of identifying strengths, challenges, and opportunities to achieve the community's vision. This process starts by understanding Richmond's social and economic background context, which sets the stage for a realistic growth strategy and outlook. Although this summary is only a snapshot in time, it validates many of the community's perceptions and provides insights to the plan's key issues and considerations.

Sources: US Census Bureau 2000 and 2011

Richmond is located
in the 5th fastest
growing county in
the United States.

Source: Forbes Magazine September 2013

Over the next 20+ years, Richmond anticipates growth within the City limits, and even faster-paced growth in the ETJ. The region is targeting all age groups, ranging from youth, college students, young professionals, families, empty nesters, and retirees.

Note: ESRI's Demographic and Income Profile, which is analyzed using national data sets, estimates Richmond's population will grow to 14,093 residents by 2018. This projection assumes a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 2.9%, which is determined to be more consistent with historic trends for Fort Bend County but not for the City. The projection in this plan uses a 2.1% CAGR for the Richmond area (if aggregated between 2013 - 2040), which includes the City of Richmond and its ETJ. This figure is based on County trends and projections from the City Water Study, Texas State Data Center, Texas Water Development Board, and linear regression methods.

ESRI's higher projection is achievable if the City decides to annex unincorporated subdivisions within the ETJ. After all, only 30% of the land within the City is vacant or rural, and a significant portion of this is not developable due to environmental constraints. The historic growth rate from 1990 to 2013 (0.81% CAGR) further supports the case for a modest-paced trend line, which is communicated in this projection. Annual or biennial reviews of the calculations will be necessary to keep pace with market fluctuations. Source to Right: US Census

Population projections are largely based on historic trends. In this case, Richmond's annexation policy will most significantly impact the ratio of City and County residents, as well as the growth rate of the City's residential base.



Historic Population Rates

Year	City Population
1990	9,801
2000	11,081
2010	13,610

70%

of land within the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) is vacant (12,600 of 18,000 acres)

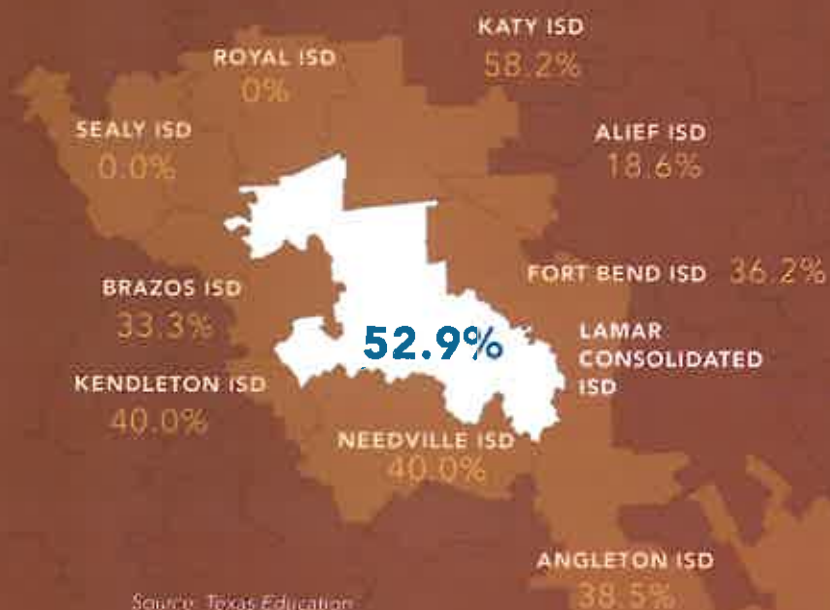
30%

of land within the City is vacant (800 acres of 2,700 acres)



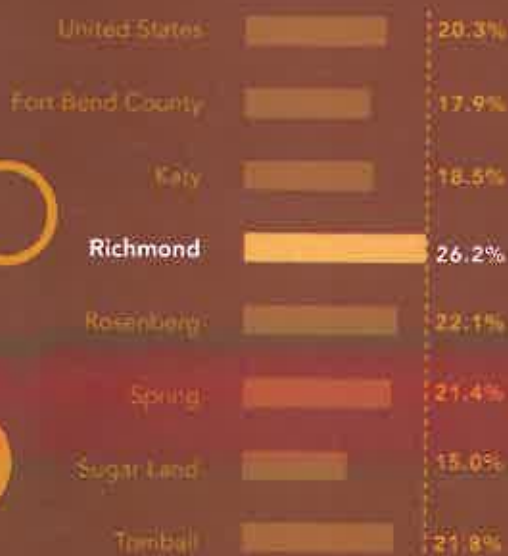
Top Performing School District

PERCENTAGE OF EXEMPLARY SCHOOLS



Highest Percentage of Young Adults and Professionals

PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS 20 - 34 YEARS OLD




Source: US Census





Richmond's school district, Lamar Consolidated ISD, has the second highest percentage of exemplary schools relative to the nine surrounding districts.

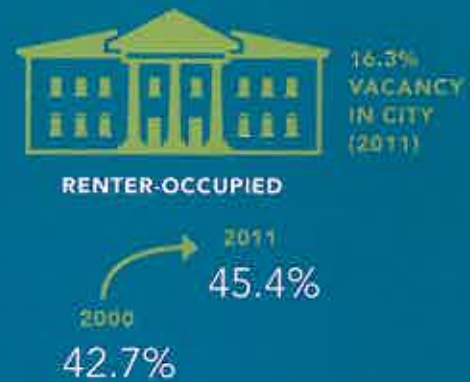
A photograph of two men working on a wooden structure outdoors. The man in the foreground, wearing a green shirt and a white cap, is using a circular saw to cut a piece of wood. The man in the background, also in a green shirt and a white cap, is standing and observing the work. They are both wearing tool belts. The background shows a blurred outdoor setting with some structures.

The City has a significantly higher percentage of older homes and apartments relative to Fort Bend County.

These numbers do not reflect new growth occurring in the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), such as Del Webb Sweetgrass and Riverpark West. However, they highlight the need to balance new development with reinvestment in more mature neighborhoods.

In 2013, Friends of North Richmond, a local non-profit organization, completed 18 home repair projects. The program is targeted to homeowners that are low-income, elderly, or disabled.

Balance of Homeowners and Renters



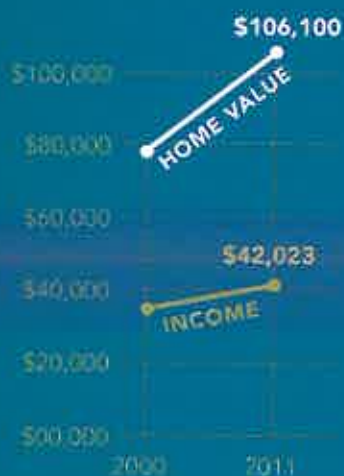
Aging Housing Stock

PERCENTAGE OF HOMES IN CITY LIMITS THAT ARE 40 YEARS OR OLDER



Highest Percentage of Families Needing Assistance

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES RECEIVING FOOD STAMPS OR SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BENEFITS



Discrepancy Between Income and Housing Increases

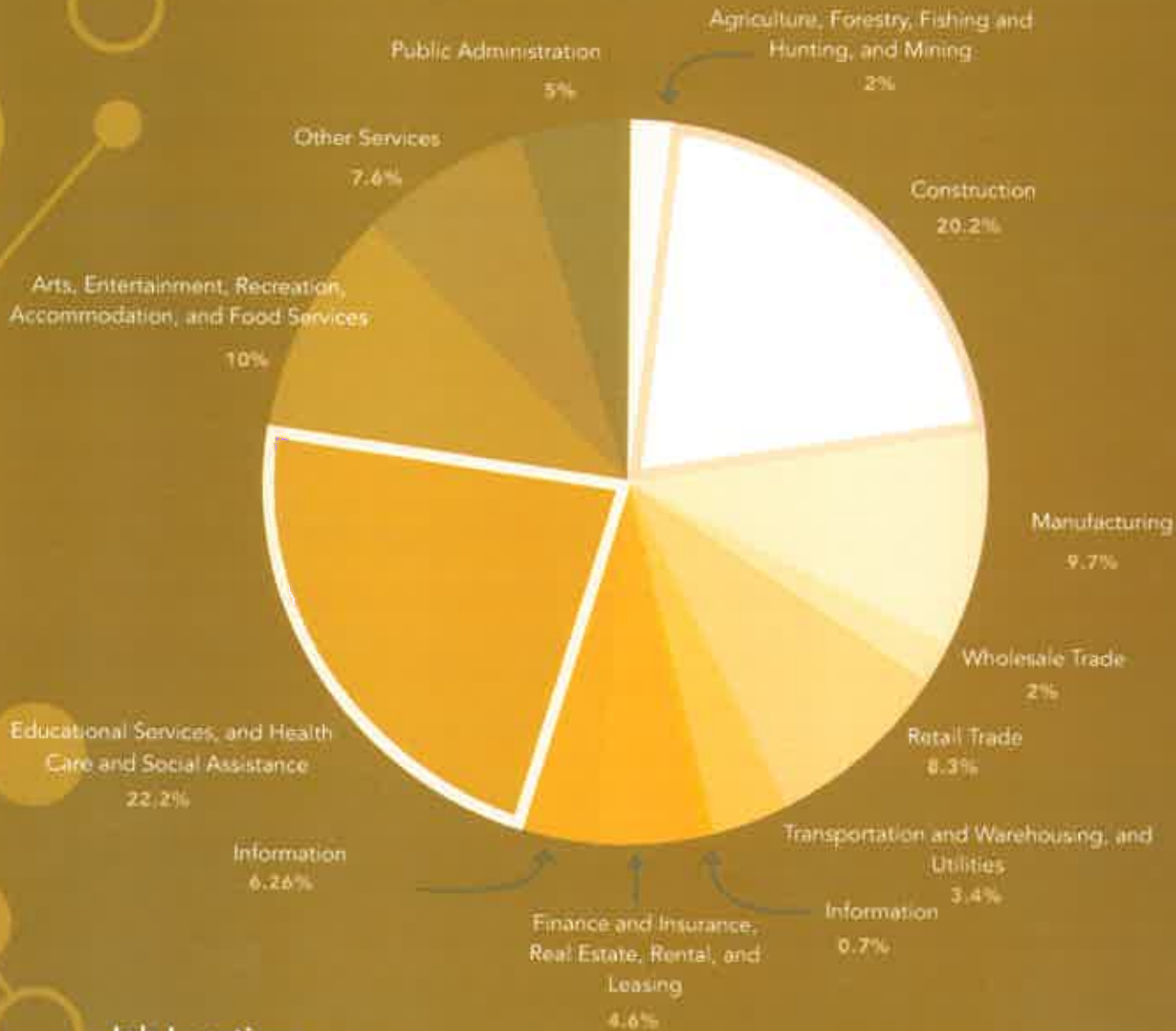
CHANGES IN MEDIAN HOME VALUE AND MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Richmond is a moderately affordable community in comparison to its peers. This ranking is derived from a "home affordability index" which is based on a ratio of 2011 median home value (\$106,100) to median household income (\$42,023). Richmond has a 2.52 ratio, indicating it is less affordable than Spring (1.69 ratio) since it has a much higher median household income (\$67,816). Richmond is more affordable than the US average (3.52 ratio).

Local Industries

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

The educational services, health care, social assistance, and construction industries are the largest employers in Richmond, primarily due to Lamar Consolidated Independent School District, Wharton County Junior College, Texas State Technical College, and OakBend Medical Center. Source: US Census Bureau, 2000, 2008-2012.



Job Locations

INFLOW / OUTFLOW OF JOB COUNTS IN 2011

Of the 4,431 jobs located in Richmond, 95 percent or 4,221 of these employees live outside the City limits. This uncovers a significant leakage that could be captured with increased housing options and attractive amenities. On the other hand, 93 percent or 4,698 residents of the 5,028 employed Richmond residents travel outside of the City limits for employment in nearby areas. Richmond's economic success will be dependent on capturing these markets locally.

Source: US Census Bureau, 2012; OnTheMap Data, 2011.

As the county seat for Fort Bend County, Richmond has a concentration of County and City jobs.

Commuters that work in Richmond but live outside the City

4,221

Residents living in Richmond but employed outside the City

210

Living and employed in Richmond

4,698

Fort Bend County Justice Center



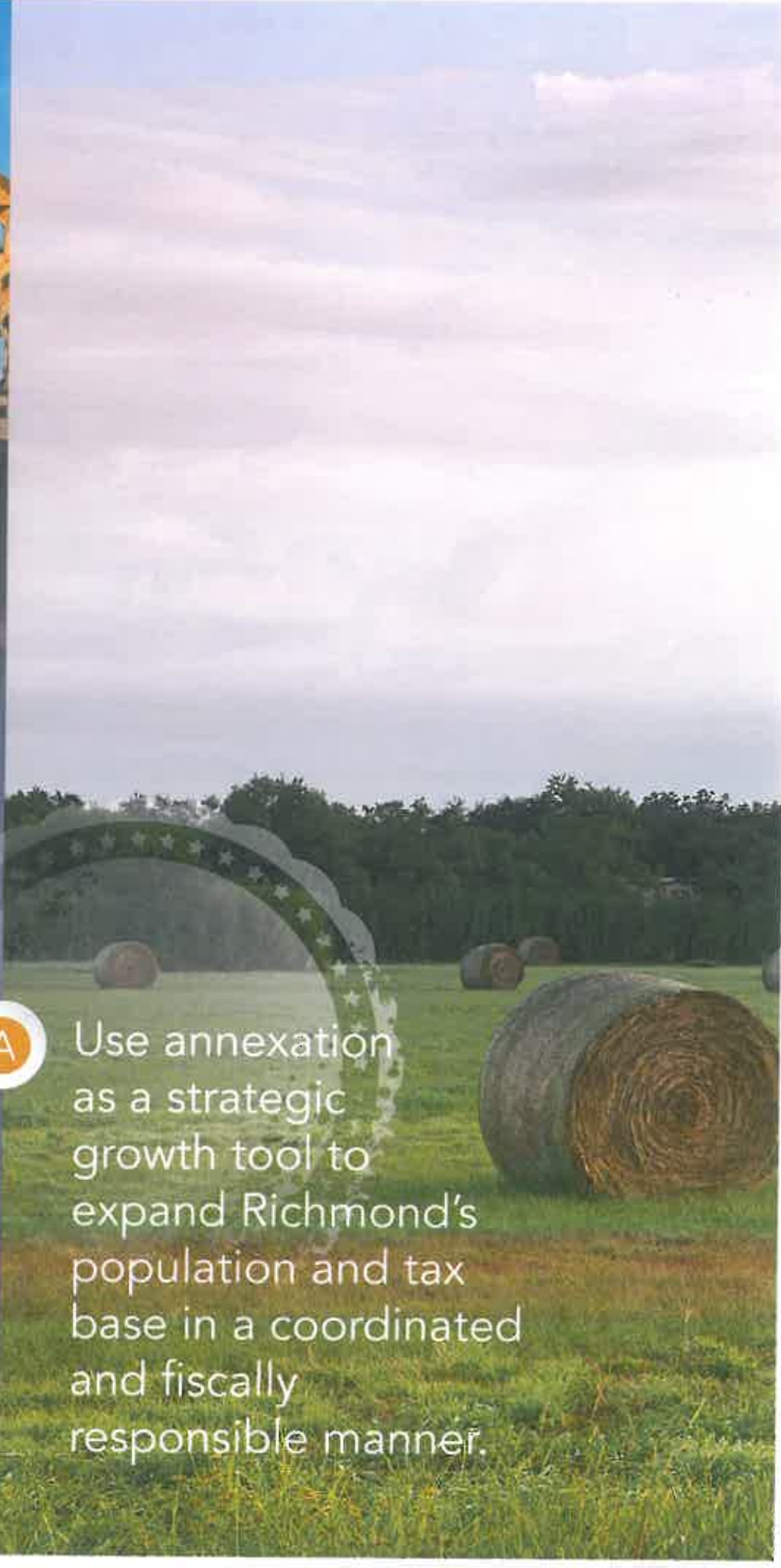
Key Recommendations

- Fiscal impact model to influence growth decisions
- Utility infrastructure provision and extension policies
- Voluntary annexations and ETJ agreements

Other Considerations

- Coordination between the Capital Improvements Program, Future Land Use Plan, and Annexation Program
- Protection of annexation areas not targeted for near-term growth
- Intergovernmental coordination for annexation and ETJ boundaries

A



Use annexation as a strategic growth tool to expand Richmond's population and tax base in a coordinated and fiscally responsible manner.

Policies

- A.1. Use fiscal impact assessments to determine that annexations are fiscally responsible from the perspective of City operations, maintenance, capital investments, and debt.
- A.2. Promote compact, contiguous, and predictable growth and annexation patterns that result in the efficient use of infrastructure systems and public safety services.
- A.3. Prioritize annexation of commercial, industrial, and mixed-use centers, as designated on the Future Land Use Plan, to maximize tax revenue and attract quality employment opportunities for Richmond residents.
- A.4. Use annexation agreements and voluntary ETJ agreements to secure the City's long-term jurisdictional interests and protect its growth trajectory.
- A.5. Use strategic partnership agreements and development agreements as a negotiation tool to increase the quality of site and building design, when appropriate.
- A.6. Monitor and advise the creation of special districts in the ETJ to encourage compatible development and infrastructure standards, to the extent possible.
- A.7. Prioritize annexations in highly visible areas at community gateways and along key corridors to ensure sound regulation of the type, pattern, and quality of development.
- A.8. Weigh the intangible benefits of annexation and the possible costs of inaction, such as potential lost opportunities to extend the City's proposed zoning authority to undeveloped areas where growth is anticipated.



Fiscal impact model to influence growth decisions

Develop a fiscal impact analysis model that can help to quantify the projected revenues and expenditures that would result from annexation. The purpose of this type of analysis is to examine how potential annexations would impact the City's near- and longer-term financial health. This type of tool varies from a simple spreadsheet (see "Example Cost of Services Worksheet" from a recent City of Rosenberg assessment) to a 100-page report document. The City's annual budgeting documents will serve as invaluable resources in quantifying the typical cost of services on a per capita basis. One-time capital improvements, in particular, should be spread over a multi-year timeframe to account for the lag time between annexation and initial collection of taxes and fees. Reference the "Costs-Benefits Decision Criteria" on the following page for a checklist of factors to consider in this analysis.

EXAMPLE COSTS OF SERVICES WORKSHEET

Source: City of Rosenberg (City Council Agenda January 22, 2013)

Service	FM 723 East	SH 36 Northeast	Highway 90A	Koeblen Rd	All
Police					
Estimated Number of calls to Area	3	7	14	2	26
Cost Per Hour	\$34.01	\$34.01	\$34.01	\$34.01	\$34.01
State average for time per call	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69
1st Year Cost of Service	\$70.40	\$164.27	\$328.54	\$46.93	\$610.14
Public Works					
Roads and Streets					
Miles of Streets	1.08	1.12	3.29	0.85	6.34
Cost for Routine Maintenance (per year/per street mile cost includes normal paving surface maintenance tasks such as pothole repair, crack sealing, roadside drainage ditch cleaning, bleeding gravel, street signs, bridge maintenance)	\$2,771.86	\$2,771.86	\$2,771.86	\$2,771.86	\$2,771.86
Streets in the proposed area for reference	Cummings Road, Joerger Road	Moore Bar Road, Huntington Road, Candler Road	Randon School Road, Muegge Road, Scott Road	Koeblen Road	
Bridge(s), rail crossing(s)		2 CMP creek crossings	1- wood bridge		
1st Year Estimated Cost of Service	\$2,993.61	\$3,104.48	\$9,118.42	\$2,356.08	\$17,573.59
Mosquito Control					
100% of Street Miles	1.08	1.12	3.29	0.85	6.34
Cost of Service per Street Mile	\$157.47	\$157.47	\$157.47	\$157.47	\$157.47
1st Year Estimated Cost of Service	\$170.07	\$176.37	\$518.08	\$133.85	\$998.36
Estimated O&M Costs	\$3,234.06	\$3,445.12	\$9,766.03	\$2,556.06	\$19,182.09
Other:					
Solid Waste: per the City's Solid Waste Contract, costs are recovered through monthly service fees					
Water/Wastewater Fund will recover costs from the customers and revenues will equal expenditures or offset expenditures.					
Existing water wells and septic may remain.					
Property Tax Revenues:					
2012 Assessed Value less Exemptions	\$6,259,540	\$8,009,585	\$12,534,715	\$11,654,930	\$38,458,750
Assessed Value of Non-Agriculture	\$1,216,650	\$2,123,145	\$6,791,425	\$1,892,070	\$11,963,290.00
Tax benefit of Non-Agriculture					
Estimated tax revenue first year (.51)	\$6,204.92	\$10,828.04	\$34,636.27	\$9,343.56	\$61,012.78
O&M Budget Estimated Fiscal Impact in First Year (.23 cents)	\$3,165.29	\$5,520.18	\$17,657.71	\$4,763.38	\$31,104.55
Debt Service Estimated Fiscal Impact in First Year (.25 cents)	\$3,241.63	\$5,307.86	\$18,976.88	\$4,580.18	\$29,908.23
Net Fiscal Impact on O&M Budget	-\$70.70	\$2,075.06	\$7,631.97	\$2,252.52	\$11,922.46
	FM 723 East	SH 36 Northeast	Highway 90A	Koeblen Rd	All

Cost-Benefits Decision Criteria

COSTS

Other than potential debt responsibility, one of the most expensive fiscal implications of annexation is the provision of City services – some immediate and others within just a few years. As required by Section 43.056 of the Texas Local Government Code, the City must extend full municipal services to newly annexed areas (i.e., only for full purpose annexations) within 2.5 years of the date of annexation. This deadline can be extended to 4.5 years if the City services cannot reasonably be provided within the initial timeframe.

Considerations for Richmond include the annual operation, maintenance, capital improvements, and/or service delivery costs of:

- Public safety services, such as police and fire protection, and emergency medical services;
- Solid waste collection;
- Water and wastewater facilities (excluding gas and electrical service);
- Larvicide mosquito control program;
- Operation of roads and streets, including lighting;
- Operation and maintenance of parks, playgrounds, and swimming pools;
- Operation and maintenance of any other publicly owned facility, building, or service; and
- Development services such as code compliance, development review, and building permits.

New development is best accommodated and most economically served where transportation, utility, and other public services are already existing or readily available. Two of the underlying challenges of merging an independent system with the City's are: (1) upgrades to substandard or deteriorated public facilities and (2) provision of services to areas that are isolated from or have indirect access to the City's street system. Given the relative cost efficiency, development in areas already within or contiguous to the City boundary and closer to existing infrastructure and services is generally more favorable than development in outlying areas. Costs associated with the provision of infrastructure are much higher for remote and/or scattered areas of development than they are for a compact and contiguous pattern of development. Research has shown that compact developments outperform spread-out development patterns by resulting in:

- 25 percent lower road costs;
- 50 to 75 percent reduction in road length; and
- 20 to 40 percent lower costs of sewer and water hookups.¹

Along with reducing private development costs, a compact

¹ "The Fiscal Cost of Sprawl," Environment Colorado Research and Policy Center, December 2003.

development pattern also lessens the cost of public service provision. For public safety services, outward development requires greater travel distance from police and fire stations to emergency sites. This increased distance results in longer response times, which, in turn, may compromise community safety and affect ratings that determine local costs of property insurance.

In context of the Richmond area's numerous special districts (e.g., MUDs, LIDs, WCIDs), a key consideration is the repayment period for any debt that would be assumed by the City. One option is deferred annexation agreements so the district can pay down its own debt before being annexed by the City.

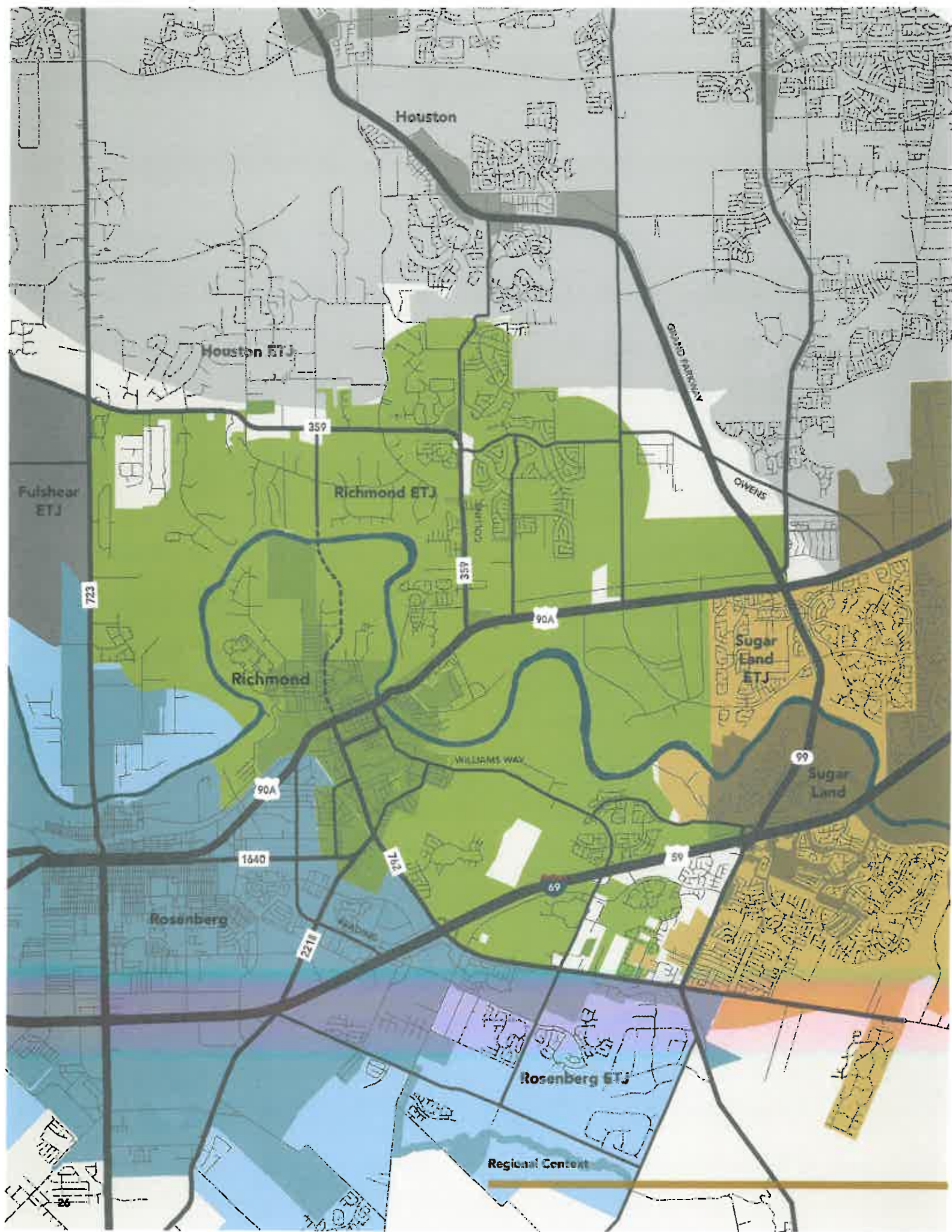
BENEFITS

One of the most immediate and quantifiable benefits of annexation is the ability of the City to expand its tax base. These benefits include:

- Property tax revenue from existing and proposed development in the annexed areas (as well as opportunity costs or loss of revenue from areas not annexed);
- Sales and use tax revenue (50 percent City share if part of a limited purpose annexation);
- Tax benefits of non-agricultural uses (or opportunity costs of agricultural exemptions); and
- Other potential tax and fee revenues, including from development impact fees if imposed by the City.

Not all benefits of annexation are quantifiable or tangible, and positive cash flow alone should not be the sole indicator of whether a particular annexation is in the best interest of the City. The following intangible benefits should also factor into annexation evaluations and decisions:

- Securing prime land for future growth areas that otherwise might be annexed by neighboring communities;
- Increasing the City's physical size and population, which could enhance its prestige and visibility in the region, and also trigger eligibility for new external funding streams (e.g., transportation, housing and community development, etc.);
- Extending the City's ability to manage land development, including the types and intensities of uses and the character and quality of new development;
- Exerting greater control over blighted or underutilized areas to ensure their revitalization and transition to more productive use; and
- Protecting natural resources and environmentally sensitive land, including effective management of river and stream corridors and their associated floodplains for the benefit of downstream property owners.





Utility infrastructure provision and extension policies

Generally avoid any lengthy extension of utility infrastructure outside the City's current City limits unless the areas to be served will immediately or shortly be annexed into the City. Given that municipal infrastructure is a key driver of land development activity, such extensions can lead to scattered and "leap frog" development patterns in fringe areas that cause service provision concerns for multiple public agencies and private service providers. Reference the City's comprehensive **Annexation Policy** for more details.



Voluntary annexations and ETJ agreements

Use voluntary annexations and ETJ agreements to strategically increase the City limits and areas of planning influence. According to Section 11.01(2) of Richmond's Home Rule Charter, the owner(s) of any land contiguous and adjacent to the City may, by petition in writing to the City Commission, request the annexation of such contiguous and adjacent land. Such voluntary annexations can be full purpose or limited purpose annexations. Until 2013, the City of Richmond operated as a general law municipality that could only annex property through voluntary petitions. Typically, one or a few property owners approached the City to annex smaller, unincorporated tracts of land into the City limits for specific purposes. For instance, CVS and Old South Plantation on FM 359 elected for a limited purpose annexation for sales tax benefits. One alternative to annexation proceedings is for property owners to enter into voluntary extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) agreements with a municipality. For Richmond, this area is defined by a one-mile radius extending from the City limits. The land is preserved for Richmond's future expansion and cannot be annexed by another City, although the City could potentially enter into negotiation over mutually beneficial coordination of boundaries. According to Section 11.01(4) of Richmond's Home Rule Charter, the extraterritorial jurisdiction boundaries may be extended by the Commission, as provided by state law. Many communities in Fort Bend County and other fast-growing counties use their ETJ authority as a strategic planning tool to proactively expand their area of influence, while protecting rural landowners from the economic pressures and physical changes that come with premature development in fringe areas. According to state law, the City's default ETJ boundary is contingent on the number of inhabitants in the City limits (i.e., one mile for cities with 5,000 to 24,999 inhabitants). However, there is no statutory limit as to how large the ETJ can grow through voluntary requests from property owners. Richmond has already expanded its one-mile ETJ boundary by accepting petitions from landowners to the west along FM 723 and to the east at the intersection of US 90A and Grand Parkway SH 99. One recent example in 2013 is the George Foundation's petition to be included in Richmond's ETJ near the park and ride on US 59 / I-69 and FM 762. This now prevents the City of Rosenberg from including this property in its City limits or ETJ.

Richmond is surrounded on all sides by Rosenberg's, Sugar Land's, Houston's, and Fulshear's municipal limits and extraterritorial jurisdictions (ETJs). Voluntary agreements enabling properties to be included in Richmond's ETJ have been an essential strategy in protecting Richmond's ability to grow.





B

Leverage public investments to enhance the existing community and promote growth.

Key Recommendations

- Joint-funded project initiatives and shared-use facilities
- Incremental infrastructure investments that can expand with growth
- Landscape beautification and screening investments with major infrastructure projects

Other Considerations

- *Recruitment of mixed-use development opportunities at major civic destinations
- Regional detention and recreation amenities
- Improved GIS inventory of City and special district facilities
- Strengthened partnerships between industry and education
- Ongoing monitoring of impact fees to ensure regional competitiveness and proportional cost of impact

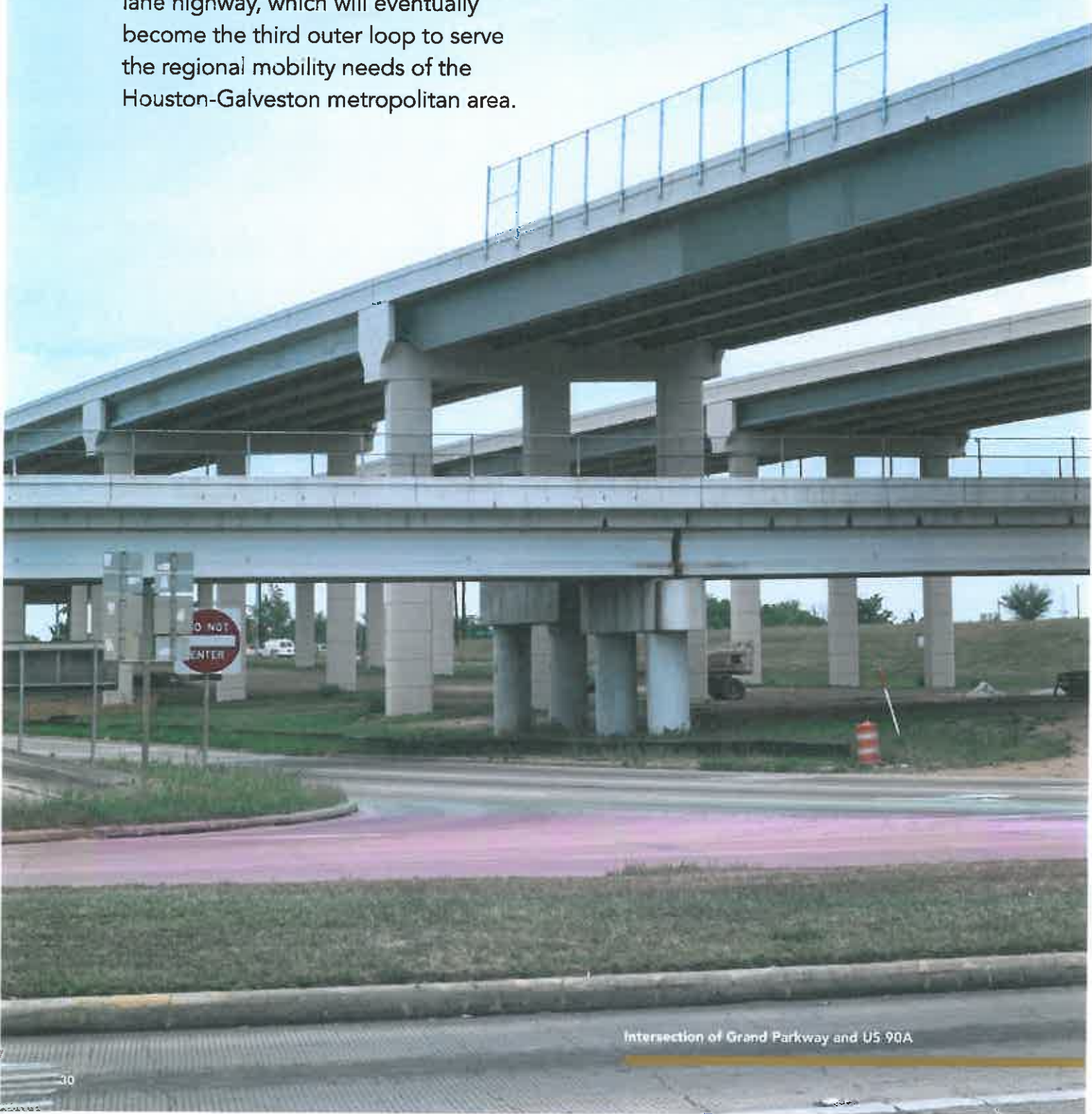
The City of Richmond has reduced taxes and expanded its infrastructure systems as many other US cities still struggle to recover from the 2007 - 2009 recession.

Policies

- B.1. Proactively guide development in a deliberate sequence to ensure capital budgeting and provision of adequate public facilities and services.
- B.2. Invest in upgradeable infrastructure systems that can expand with growth so the City does not overextend its resources in the initial stages of investment.
- B.3. Adhere to an incremental infrastructure system repair and replacement program to mitigate large-scale or system-wide deterioration.
- B.4. Strengthen intergovernmental, institutional, and public-private partnerships across the City, Fort Bend County, and Houston/Galveston region to maximize cost savings and ensure optimal use of facilities and resources.
- B.5. Invest in modern and energy-efficient facilities that can best support current and prospective residents and businesses.
- B.6. Use and continually update the Capital Improvements Program, Future Land Use Plan, and Fiscal Impact Analyses to make public investment decisions.
- B.7. Use public infrastructure investments as an economic development incentive tools - in balance with other growth and fiscal decisions - to encourage business retention, expansion, and recruitment.
- B.8. Protect and conserve natural resources in the development and operation of the City's utility and transportation systems.

Grand Parkway

Development of the Grand Parkway will increase Richmond's volume of traffic. This regional highway is proposed to be a 180+mile, six-lane highway, which will eventually become the third outer loop to serve the regional mobility needs of the Houston-Galveston metropolitan area.



Intersection of Grand Parkway and US 90A



Joint-funded project initiatives and shared-use facilities

Seek opportunities for shared-use and joint-funded project initiatives. Examples include the large number of transportation improvements jointly funded by the City, Fort Bend County, and Texas Department of Transportation; utility infrastructure agreements shared with adjoining municipalities and municipal utility districts; and recreational facilities potentially shared with the County, Lamar Consolidated Independent School District, Fort Bend Technical Center, and YMCA. One of the more common trends is to pair stormwater detention facilities with recreational amenities. According to the Fort Bend County Drainage Criteria Manual, which is used as a guide by the City of Richmond, "the amount of land required for a stormwater detention facility is generally quite substantial. For this reason, it is logical that storage facilities could serve a secondary role as parks or recreational areas whenever possible" (Section 6.5). Many detention basins throughout the City, such as Wal-Mart's, are fenced off and hidden on the back of the site. As the City seeks to expand its parks and recreation amenities, these facilities - when ideally located and of sufficient size - could be enhanced and expanded in potential partnership with the City or other businesses. This form of shared use also relieves some of the cost and burden for drainage improvements that would otherwise fall on individual properties and private developments. The Lake Richmond project, which is proposed to the south of Morton Cemetery and to the north of Wessendorff Park, will serve as a model example of a large-scale detention basin that is enhanced as a recreational amenity.



Transportation Investments

One of the fundamental "laws" of planning and development indicates increases/improvements in transportation routes lead to increased development, and development, in return, leads to more increases/improvements in transportation routes. Because these two important aspects are so closely related, it is important to make sure they equally provide for each other. To boost economic development, the correct investments need to be made in transportation.

Declines in federal and state transportation funds are requiring local governments to use their own funds on transportation under their jurisdiction. Currently, revenue from local governments provides about 36 percent of surface transportation funding in the United States.¹ Based on the limited federal transportation spending in recent years, many lessons were learned in choosing projects and targeting funds that should also be noted at the local government level. According to the Bipartisan Policy Center's National Transportation Policy Project (NTPP), future spending on surface transportation should be focused to capture long-term, sustainable

economic benefits rather than just immediate job creation². Spending large amounts of money on transportation projects for the primary purpose of immediate job creation risks mis-allocating resources in ways that fail to maximize returns to the economy.

In addition, a report prepared for the State Smart Transportation Initiative by the Center for Neighborhood Technology suggests that transportation policies will increase economic development if they exhibit the following criteria:³

- "Increase and improve cost-effective transportation options;
- Result in more cost effective transportation facility and service investments;
- Increase transport system efficiency (reduce total costs or increase total benefits);
- Create more efficient pricing by making prices more accurately reflect marginal costs;
- Create more neutral public policies; and
- Reduce resource costs, such as the amount of fuel consumed per unit of transport and the amount of land devoted to transport facilities."

Sources:

1. http://www.transportation-usa.net/funding/financing/funding/local_funding/
2. Strengthening Connections Between Transportation Investments and Economic Growth by NTPP
3. Economic Effects of Public Investment in Transportation and Directions for the Future by the Center for Neighborhood Technology



Incremental infrastructure investments that can expand with growth

Invest in upgradeable infrastructure systems to not overextend the City's resources in early stages of investment. In part, this requires specialized master plans for the City's utility (water, wastewater, drainage), transportation, and parks and recreation (public parks, trails, greenways, open space) infrastructure. When updated frequently, these plans enable much closer consideration of facility, staffing, and other strategic factors that ultimately lead to some of the most far-reaching decisions municipal governments make. Master plan findings and recommendations also are an essential input to a City's Capital Improvements Program, as well as related grant pursuits that can leverage limited local dollars with external funding sources. The City has proactively invested in major upgrades to its wastewater and water systems to accommodate future growth, both within the City limits and ETJ. The City's wastewater system currently operates at 48 percent of capacity: 2.4 million gallons per day (MGPD) relative to 5 MGPD total capacity, with many options for system expansion. For instance, the City opened its second wastewater treatment plant (5111 Williams Way Boulevard) near the Justice Center in 2011. The plant operates at 33 percent of capacity, but it can be expanded and upgraded to increase its overall capacity by nine times, from 0.95 to 9 MGPD. It currently services the City of Richmond and five municipal utility districts (MUDs): Fort Bend County (FBC) MUD 121 (Riverpark West), FBC MUD 19 (Riverwood Village), FBC MUD 140 (River's Edge), FBC MUD 145 (Rio Vista), and FBC MUD 187 (Del Webb). For a similar service area, the City's water system operates at 43 percent of capacity: 3 MGPD relative to 7 MGPD total capacity. The City already plans to make major water plant upgrades, as documented in the City's 15-Year Capital Improvements Program (2014-2028). These include multi-year upgrades to the Edgar Water Plant (\$5 million), upgrades to the Southside Water Plant (\$3.9 million), and the Downtown Water Plant (\$4.5 million).



Landscape beautification and screening investments with major infrastructure projects

In coordination with construction of core infrastructure improvements, identify ways to enhance the streetscape design, landscaping, and screening of the public realm. It is easier to design and construct these street enhancements when the street is first built. Due to the overall transportation philosophy of the past 50 years, however, this has not been the case. Instead, many cities are faced with designing and financing these streetscape enhancements after much of the corridor is well established, and the placement of buildings limits the type of enhancements, as seen in Downtown Richmond. While this results in increased complexity (and oftentimes more money), many jurisdictions still move forward with beautification projects because the end result is an improved appearance and enhanced economic competitiveness. One of the major advantages that Richmond has is that the City and County are actively reinvesting in its major corridors, such as the Williams Way Boulevard widening project. This investment coincided with the relocation of the Justice Center, resulting in enhanced sidewalks on both sides of the street and a center-divided landscape median. These types of projects have a significant impact on the image of Richmond and its quality of life for residents and visitors. Decorative enhancements requiring less of an investment may include amenities such as pavement colors and patterns at intersections, crosswalk textures, ornamental street fixtures (e.g., light poles and mast arms), unique signage, green space and land contouring, and street trees.





City Wastewater Treatment Facility



Strengthen transportation connections and increase choices between ways to travel.

Key Recommendations

- Regional advocacy for transportation funding and policy formation
- Mobility and connectivity updates to land development regulations and street design standards
- Coordinated City-County thoroughfare planning
- Sidewalk, bike lane, and trail planning with rights-of-way protections
- Transit feasibility study to explore local circulator

Other Considerations

- Traffic demand management system
- Incorporation of a street connectivity index into the Subdivision Regulations
- Localized traffic calming and travel speed studies
- Regional coordination with railroads to identify viability of an alternative track that bypasses Richmond

Policies

- C.1 Create a mobility network of interconnected activity centers, corridors, and neighborhoods that will provide a structure for guiding new growth and development. This will entail an efficient, well connected street layout that provides multiple paths to external destinations (and critical access for emergency vehicles) while also discouraging non-local or cut-through traffic.
- C.2 Strive to provide a variety of linked transportation options serving the City, so that residents and visitors can go where they need to go by driving, walking, biking, or public transit.
- C.3 Improve the safety and accessibility of all travel modes using traffic calming techniques and other design standards throughout the City and ETJ.
- C.4 Adhere to "complete streets" principles, meaning new construction meets the current or future needs of persons of all abilities or may be easily modified to meet such provisions.
- C.5 Seek to provide efficient and continuous regional connectivity through partnerships and ongoing dialogue with Fort Bend County and the surrounding municipalities.
- C.6 Require new streets to provide direct connections to already developed areas by way of continuing collector streets and providing access to and through the development.
- C.7 Adhere to design standards that meet the current and future needs of persons with a disability, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- C.8 Optimize the number of street, sidewalk, and trail connection points to the existing street pattern and the emerging trail system.



Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

In the mid-term, Richmond is more likely to connect to the region by way of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) than light rail. BRT is an enhanced bus system that operates on bus lanes or other transitways. BRT aims to combine the capacity and speed of rail or metro with the flexibility, lower cost, and simplicity of a bus system. As of November 2013, more than 166 cities worldwide have implemented BRT.

Why BRT?

The continued growth of urban and suburban areas has created a need for improved transport capacity, access, and efficiency. Current transit options such as conventional bus systems are often unattractive,

Houston is among the 31 US cities with BRT systems.

Houston's reversible HOV lanes have direct ramps to Park-and-Ride lots, transit centers, and Downtown streets.

difficult to use, slow, and unreliable. BRT is a transit solution that often involves lower capital costs while providing greater coverage to low- and medium-density areas and more readily adapting to changing land use and population patterns compared to rail-based systems.

Main Features

BRT systems involve nine key components, including:

- Runningway / Dedicated Lanes
- Busway Alignment
- Off-Board Fare Collection
- Intersection Treatment
- Platform-Level Boarding
- Stations
- Intelligent Transportation Systems (Real-Time Traveler)
- Specialized Service Patterns / Route Structure
- Effective Branding

The Demand for Park-and-Ride Expansion

Currently, Fort Bend County coordinates three commuter buses that run from Fort Bend County to Greenway Plaza, the Galleria, and the Texas Medical Center; however, there is no commuter bus nor seamless (one seat, no transfer) park-and-ride transit service that shuttles Fort Bend residents to and from Downtown Houston. In 2010, 13,700 Fort Bend residents commuted to work in Downtown Houston, according to Texas Transportation Institute (TTI). TTI researchers estimate that a park-and-ride service from Fort Bend County to Downtown Houston would be utilized for roughly 1,700 park-and-ride trips per day. **Further coordination on this park-and-ride effort is needed among Fort Bend County Transit and Houston's Metro.**

Case Study:

Post Oak Rapid Transit

Uptown Houston has taken the lead on making the Post Oak Rapid Transit plans a reality. The planned mass transit corridor on Post Oak Boulevard utilizes BRT and involves buses running on their own lanes from the Westpark Transit Center planned near US-59, along the freeway to Post Oak Boulevard. The Uptown BRT connection to transit centers is crucial because, "most workers in the Uptown area commute from southwest and northwest of I-610," comments Uptown Houston President John Breeding. While Houston's METRO coordinates 300 park-and-ride buses daily, currently only 10 of those buses service the Uptown area. Uptown Houston will provide the majority of the money for this project through a tax increment reinvestment zone (TIRZ) with supplemental funds from H-GAC and the State of Texas.

Rendering of proposed mass transit corridor along Post Oak Boulevard.





Regional advocacy for transportation funding and policy formation

In order to be competitive in the region, improve connectivity at the local and regional levels for roadway, trail, bridge, transit, and utility infrastructure projects. The location and economic vitality of Richmond are a good foundation to accommodate continued growth, but further strategic investments are needed in order to compete with regional economic influences. Increasing accessibility can both improve quality of life and create economic opportunities. Ensure collaboration and seek input among City departments, the West Fort Bend Management District, Fort Bend County, Fort Bend Green, METRO, Houston-Galveston Area Council, Gulf Coast Rail District, Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and the community to ensure effective coordination among the various transportation modes and their related transportation improvement projects when making land use and transportation decisions. Regional advocacy is especially critical for transit (e.g., bus rapid transit and light rail systems), which requires a strong network and multi-jurisdictional funding streams. The City should evaluate development proposals and transportation investments (e.g., linkages between adjacent neighborhoods) based on the impacts of these investments on the overall transportation system.



Mobility and connectivity updates to land development regulations and street design standards

Review the street design standards for the purpose of:

- **Thoroughfare development.** Preservation of rights-of-way both within the City and the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) and development of "complete streets" meaning suitability for all modes of transportation.
- **Traffic management.** In order to provide for an efficient movement of vehicles, the traffic carrying capacities of area roadways must be preserved. This relates to the use of land adjacent to the City's corridors, as well as their means of access. It also relates to the design of roadways.
- **Pedestrian mobility.** There must be an increased emphasis on pedestrian improvements to safeguard the community's small-town feel and quality of life. This includes sidewalks along area roadways, safe and accessible crossings, and provisions for on-street bike lanes and off-street trails and pathways.
- **Corridor appearance.** The community's corridors offer an opportunity to establish a positive first impression of Richmond. The design and appearance of the roadway, as well as the properties that abut it, are of essential importance to enhance community aesthetics and contribute to a quality visual environment.

Key considerations include:

- **Access management policies**
 - » Using US 90A Access Management Plan as a starting point, develop access management guidelines for all roadway functional classifications identified on the Thoroughfare Plan such as:
 - » Driveway and intersection density
 - » Consolidation of driveways/access points and shared driveways
 - » Addition of right or left turns lanes at certain locations (with or without planted center medians)
 - » Signal timing
 - » Lane widths
 - » Allowances for deceleration and/or acceleration at ingress/egress points
- **Complete streets and context sensitive design policies.** considerations include:
 - » 24' median requirements for minor arterials and collectors (in addition to existing 30' median requirement for major arterials)
 - » For collector streets with designated greenway, include 8' bike lane or 8' off-street shared-use trail; for minor residential streets with designated greenway, include 5' on-street bike lane.
 - » Increase sidewalk width minimums to 5' for all minor residential streets
 - » For minor residential streets with no potential for future connection or extension, allow for performance standards based on type of access, number of dwelling units served, and the units' average frontages to determine the street rights-of-way, pavement width, and other design requirements such as parking lanes, curb width, parkways, and sidewalks.
- **Traffic impact analysis requirements** (based on the Institute of Transportation Engineers Trip Generation Manual), considerations include:
 - » 750 trips per average daily weekday or 100 directional trips during the peak hour
 - » Redevelopment, rezoning, additions, or changes of occupancy that are expected to increase trip generation by 20 percent or greater than existing conditions
- **Neighborhood connectivity.** considerations include:
 - » Require street continuity within and between abutting developments
 - » Require continuous and evenly spaced collector roadways
 - » Establish provisions for minor residential streets, including cohesiveness with the communitywide and area street network, required access easements, means of plat delineation, required maintenance by a property owners' association, and location of gates
 - » Neighborhood connectivity index



Coordinated City-County thoroughfare planning

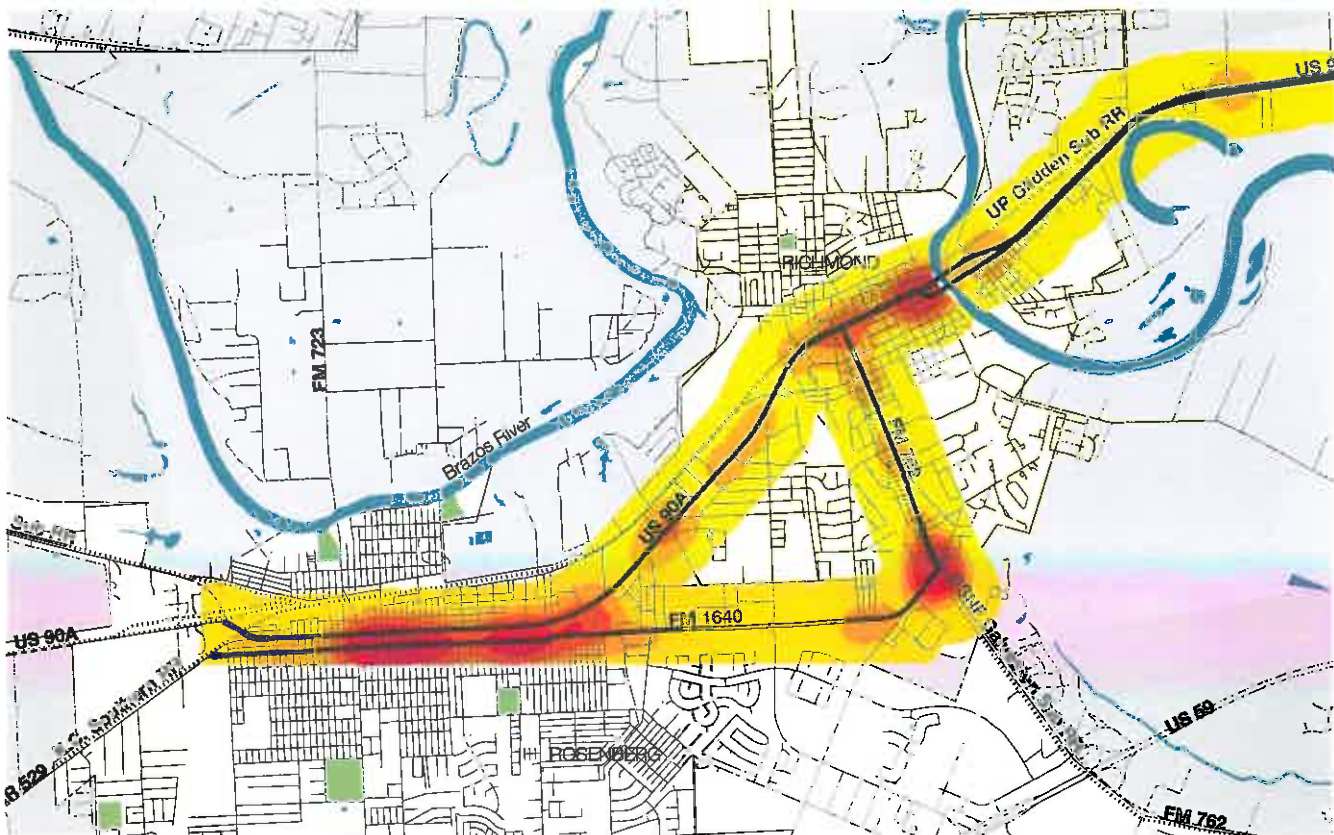
Use the City's Thoroughfare Plan as a communication tool to facilitate coordination and capital improvements programming with Fort Bend County (concurrently updating its Thoroughfare Plan) and the Texas Department of Transportation. The Thoroughfare Plan is essential for developing the City's Capital Improvements Program, addressing the nature and conditions of the various functional classifications for roadways in the City, and providing guidelines for designing these streets to be compatible with adjacent uses. The Thoroughfare plan is responsible for establishing the location, type, and minimum development standards necessary to meet projected long-term growth within the area. In order to stay current, it requires ongoing monitoring of traffic growth on collectors and arterials. To do so, this plan, development requirements, and approval procedures must stipulate and enforce standards to avoid discontinuous and irregular street patterns, particularly on the fringe and in the outlying areas where development is occurring in a noncontiguous manner. The traffic carrying capacity of roadways must be preserved and improved through appropriate design of the street system and adequate standards for property access. This requires development of a strategy for investing in a broad range of infrastructure projects which prioritize street and traffic improvements that support the growth of and access to existing employment, services, parks, and schools.

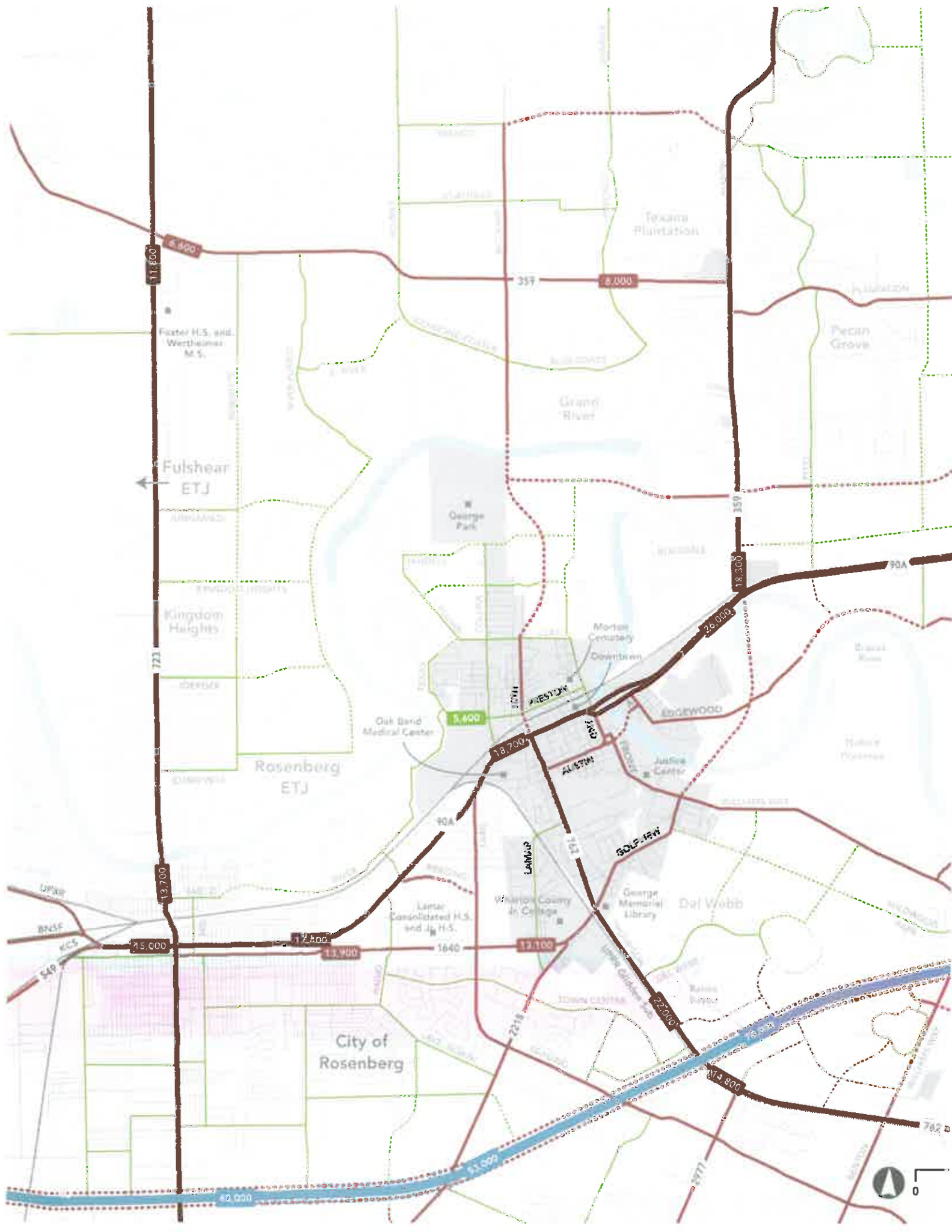


Golfview Road

Crash Analysis

Source: US 90A Access Management Plan, Draft 2014





Thoroughfare Plan

The Thoroughfare Plan is a long-range planning tool that identifies the location and type of roadway facilities necessary to meet projected growth over a 20- to 30-year planning horizon.

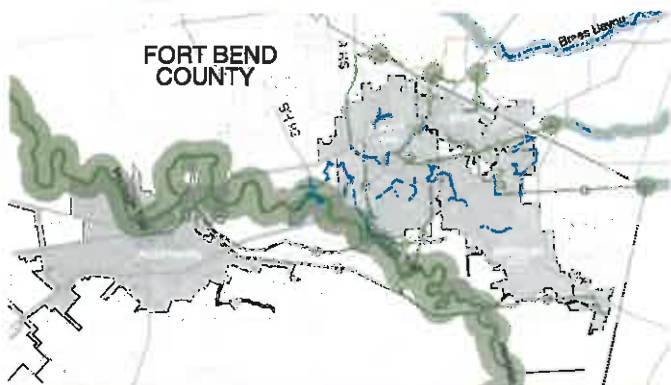
The Thoroughfare Plan displays the proposed general alignments for the extensions of existing collector and arterial roadways and planned new roadways. ***It is important to note that the actual alignments of these roadways will likely vary from this plan and will be determined through the subdivision development process and the preliminary engineering phase of design.*** Slight modifications to facility locations, such as a shift of an alignment several hundred feet one way or another or changes in roadway curvature are warranted and accepted as long as the intent of the Thoroughfare Plan to provide system connectivity and appropriate types of facilities is not compromised.

The plan does not typically show future minor residential streets because they function principally to provide access to individual sites and parcels, so their ultimate alignments will, therefore, vary depending upon individual land development plans. Minor residential street alignment should be determined by the City in conjunction with land owners as part of the subdivision development process. Likewise, collectors are required with new development but are not shown in all places on the Thoroughfare Plan – particularly in the far outlying areas of the ETJ – since their alignments will depend on the surrounding street system and the layout and density of development. They are, nevertheless, vital to an efficient and viable transportation network and must, therefore, not be overlooked during the subdivision development and review process.



Sidewalk, bike lane, and trail planning with rights-of-way protections

FORT BEND COUNTY



The Fort Bend County Subregional Plan proposes a Heritage Trail along the Brazos River (above). Reference the Brazos River Recreation Master Plan for a more refined version of proposed trailheads and canoe launches.



The proposed transit circulator (green line), as illustrated in the Fort Bend Subregional Plan, has been extended to include North Richmond (maroon dots).



Transit feasibility study to explore local circulator

Coordinate with Fort Bend County and the City of Rosenberg to see if they are willing to partner on an updated Transit Feasibility Study to refine a local circulator bus route and reconcile the different paths recommended in the City of Rosenberg Transit and Pedestrian Study (2010), the Fort Bend County Subregional Plan (2013), and this plan. This would also include an updated cost table (capital investments and maintenance) and multi-phase implementation timeline. Major Richmond destinations include: the Justice Center; Downtown; North Richmond neighborhoods; Fort Bend Technical Center; Brazos Town Center; transit Linkages, such as the Park-and-Ride lots; and Wal-Mart. More frequent and direct routes should be made between the Justice Center and Downtown Richmond during the lunch hour to facilitate economic development initiatives. The initial study estimated \$319,560 in annual operating costs and \$192,000 in total capital investments based on the path in the 2010 City of Rosenberg Transit and Pedestrian Study.

Plan for and invest in a trail system using the Trails Master Plan, Fort Bend County Subregional Plan, Brazos River Master Plan, and US 90A Access Management Plan as policy guidance. This involves broad partnerships between regional entities including, but not limited to, Fort Bend County, Fort Bend Green, H-GAC, and surrounding jurisdictions. One of the key considerations is the preservation of rights-of-way for sidewalks and trails in new subdivisions, similar to how major thoroughfares are protected. The City is currently working on a Trail Master Plan to identify existing conditions, proposed trail alignments, and prioritization of improvements. This overall effort to expand the City's trail system will require a combination of public and private funds, including transportation, parks and recreation, and health grants to supplement City investments. This effort should be combined with the proposed pavement management and maintenance program (PMMP). This would entail a long-range strategy for reconstructing and improving the appearance, function, and safety of the City's existing streets and sidewalks. The program could be structured with the following considerations:¹

- The City will be divided into 6 to 10 inspection districts with a PMMP condition rating being performed on one district per fiscal year
- Upon completion of all districts, the cycle will repeat
- Older, most densely populated areas will be inspected first
- Requests for service and exceptions from outside of the designated area will be included as warranted
- The PMMP program provides for more focused inspections and repairs and a more cost effective process due to proximity of repairs

¹This program is structured similar to the City of Missouri City's pavement management and maintenance program.



What is Mobility?

This plan uses the phrase "mobility" to refer to all modes of travel, including motor vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit. While traveling by car is the most common mode, this plan recognizes that the current plans for building and widening roadways will not adequately address future needs alone. With the City's continued growth, high costs of developing infrastructure, escalating fuel costs, and impacts to air quality and the environment, the community must also invest in more sidewalks, off-street trails, bike lanes, and transit systems.

Options should apply not only in terms of offering different modes of transportation, but also in offering multiple travel routes on the roadway system. Providing such options will require promotion of development patterns that encourage alternative land uses and shorter trips, such as mixed-use developments and smaller-scale commercial uses within close proximity to neighborhoods. The transportation system has a strong influence on the type and quality of growth and should, therefore, be closely coordinated with the community's overall land use and character policies.

Collins Road

Key Recommendations

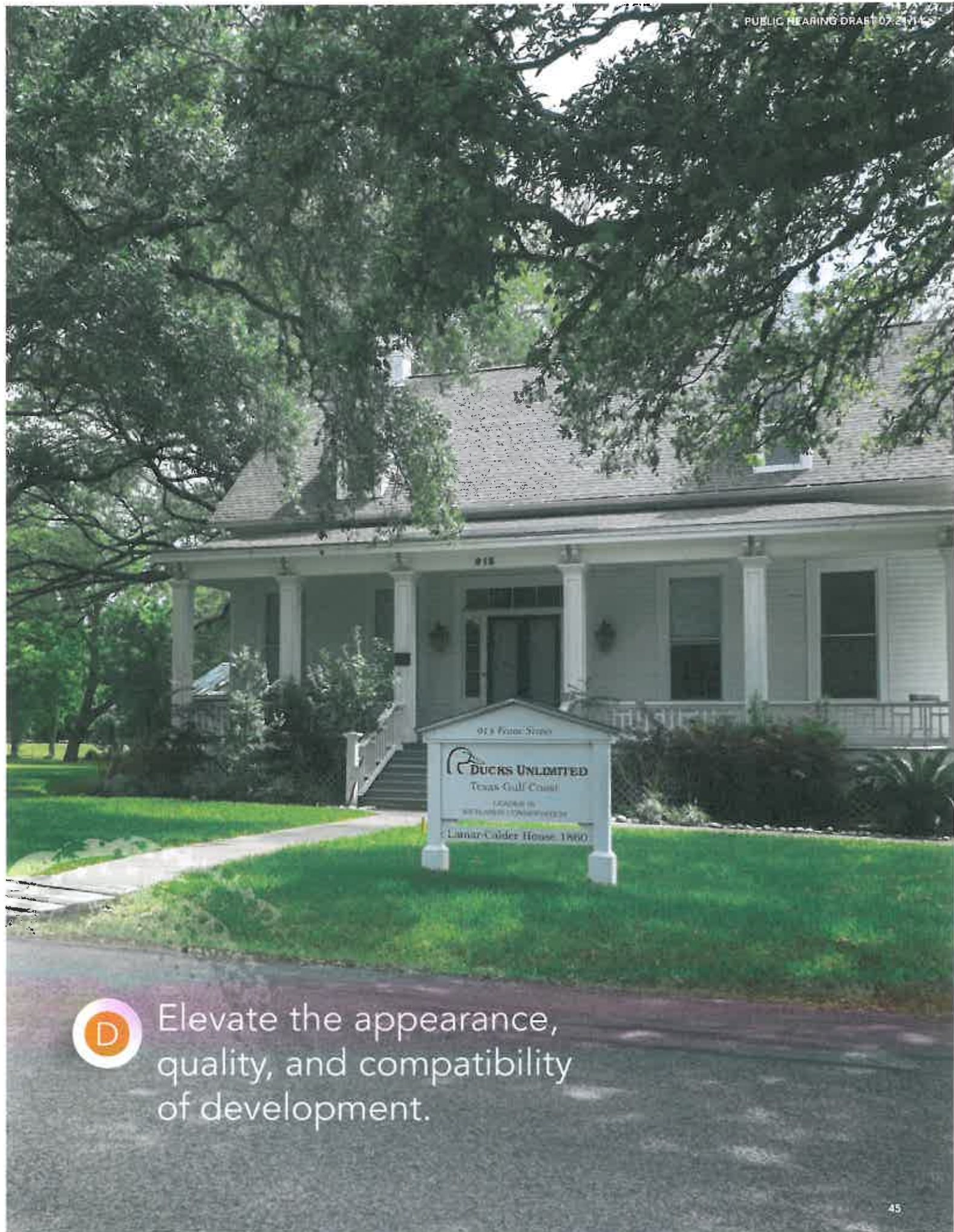
- Updated land development regulations
- Streamlined development review process

Other Considerations

- *Public investments at Richmond's key community gateways
- *Recruitment of high-quality land developers
- Relationship between West Fort Bend Management District guidelines and the City's land development regulations
- Enhanced requirements of development agreements
- Advocacy program to aid in code compliance (e.g., weeds, debris, junk vehicles)
- Façade improvement grant program for commercial properties
- Requirement of traffic impact analyses for major developments

Policies

- D.1 Cultivate a predictable investment climate that attracts high-quality development practices (e.g., architecture, building quality, landscaping) by protecting property investments from incompatible or ad hoc development decisions.
- D.2 Continuously re-evaluate the City's incentives, policies, and regulations, while at the same time, setting quality and character standards that are compatible with the historic character and future trajectory of the community.
- D.3 Strategically locate higher-intensity uses near areas that have sufficient transportation and utility infrastructure capacity to support them, such as commercial, industrial, civic, and multifamily uses.
- D.4 Set aside a balanced mix of residential, civic, and commercial land uses to meet the lifestyle needs of all residents and business owners.
- D.5 Guide the types, patterns, and designs of housing developments using the Future Land Use Plan and development regulations.
- D.6 Ensure infill development will be compatible with existing and well-established neighborhoods through appropriate use, site design, and patterns of development.
- D.7 Protect the rural heritage of Richmond and its ETJ by preventing premature urbanization of undeveloped land through rural and open space land use designations.
- D.8 Set aside land for a wide range of development intensities, even within each land use type. The overall development pattern will typically transition from urban to rural character as the distance from Downtown increases.
- D.9 Encourage transitions and buffering between different land use intensities, such as residential and industrial uses, using bufferyards, screening, pocket parks, and linear greenways.
- D.10 Design multifamily housing at a density and scale that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, available utilities, and roadway capacity. Larger multifamily developments should be located on sites with adequate space for off-street parking, accessory structures, and recreational activity.
- D.11 Promote attractive and multi-functional streetscapes, whether achieved through street trees and other design elements, which "soften" an otherwise intensive atmosphere and draw residents to enjoy common areas of their neighborhood.
- D.12 Locate schools, parks and recreation amenities, and daily conveniences within close proximity and safe access to neighborhoods, if not within or at its edges.



Elevate the appearance,
quality, and compatibility
of development.



Updated land development regulations

At the conclusion of the comprehensive planning process, review the City's land development ordinances and associated procedures to ensure they are consistent with the policies and objectives of this plan. This includes updates to the Subdivision Ordinance, consideration of a Zoning Code, and potential consolidation of ordinances into a Unified Development Code. The purpose of these updates is to:

- Influence the ability to determine and realize the intended character of future development;
- Increase predictability as to quality development outcomes;
- Improve compatibility within and between districts;
- Attract highly-skilled workers and high-tech businesses;
- Increase design flexibility to protect natural resources and valued open space;
- Facilitate a streamlined and efficient approval processes;
- Better plan for infrastructure needs;
- Allow for mixed-use projects on a by-right basis; and
- Ensure buffering is commensurate with the level of impact on adjacent and abutting properties.

Priority considerations include, but are not limited to:

- Creation of zoning districts to focus on character (e.g., rural, suburban, general, historic) versus traditional use classifications, including potential for Neighborhood Conservation districts to facilitate infill development;
- Enhanced parking design, location, and minimum landscaping requirements;
- Higher quality multi-family housing design standards (e.g., variable building heights, facade articulation, setbacks, building materials);
- Low-impact development standards (e.g., site design, stormwater management, landscaping);
- Requirements for reuse or demolition of a building if it becomes vacant or dormant for an extended period of time;
- Corridor building material standards* (e.g., building facades 80% masonry, glass, or combination thereof);
- Screening standards* (e.g., permanently fenced or screened with masonry enclosures that closely resemble the associated building's exterior color, with solid metal gates at the enclosure opening);
- Fencing standards* (e.g., any residential development adjacent to a commercial development or redevelopment shall be screened with a masonry fence);
- Corridor building architectural design* (e.g., avoid long, unarticulated facades; exposed, untreated precision block walls; false fronts; unarticulated building facades);
- Loading facilities* (e.g., shall not be located at the front of buildings nor visible from the corridors);
- Screening* (e.g., shall be used to screen automobiles, loading, and storage areas and utility structures, blend with the site's architecture); and
- Mobility and connectivity (see Community Priority C).

*Indicates currently in the West Fort Bend Management District Guidelines

Although the *Future Land Use Plan* is only a guidance document, its present-day role is especially relevant since the future Planning and Zoning Commission will be considering the development of a *Zoning Ordinance*. ***It is only through an official Zoning Map (included within a Zoning Ordinance) and the ongoing zoning administration process that binding, legally enforceable decisions are made about property uses and compatibility on a case-by-case basis.***

Future Land Use Plan

Process

The process of developing and refining the *Future Land Use Plan* occurred in three stages. The first step in the plan development process involved an analysis of opportunity areas for residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-uses. City staff and the consultant team partnered with the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee to develop several *Opportunity Analysis Maps*. These diagrams delineated new growth areas and their use types. While jurisdictional boundaries, availability of infrastructure, and ownership constraints were generally considered in the creation of these maps, the purpose of the exercise was to depict the community's overall vision.

The next step in the process involved a translation of these diagrams into the *Future Land Use Plan*. Although this map was evaluated with a finer level of detail than the opportunity areas maps, it still functions as a long-range planning tool. Property owners and City officials still must consider site-specific implications through development planning and review.

The final stage involved refinement of the *Future Land Use Plan* through detailed examination of environmental and infrastructure considerations.

The comparison below highlights the distinct purposes and uses of a *Future Land Use Plan* relative to a *Zoning Map*.

Future Land Use Plan

Purpose

- Outlook for the future use of land and the character of development in the community
- Macro level – general development pattern

Use

- Guidance for a potential *Zoning Map* and related decisions (e.g., zone change requests, variance applications, etc.)
- Baseline for monitoring consistency of actions and decisions with the *Comprehensive Master Plan*

Inputs and Considerations

- Inventory of existing land use in the City
- Elevating area character (e.g., rural, suburban, historic) as a core planning focus along with basic land use (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial, institutional)
- The map includes a notation required by Texas Local Government Code Section 213.005: "A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries."

Zoning Map

Purpose

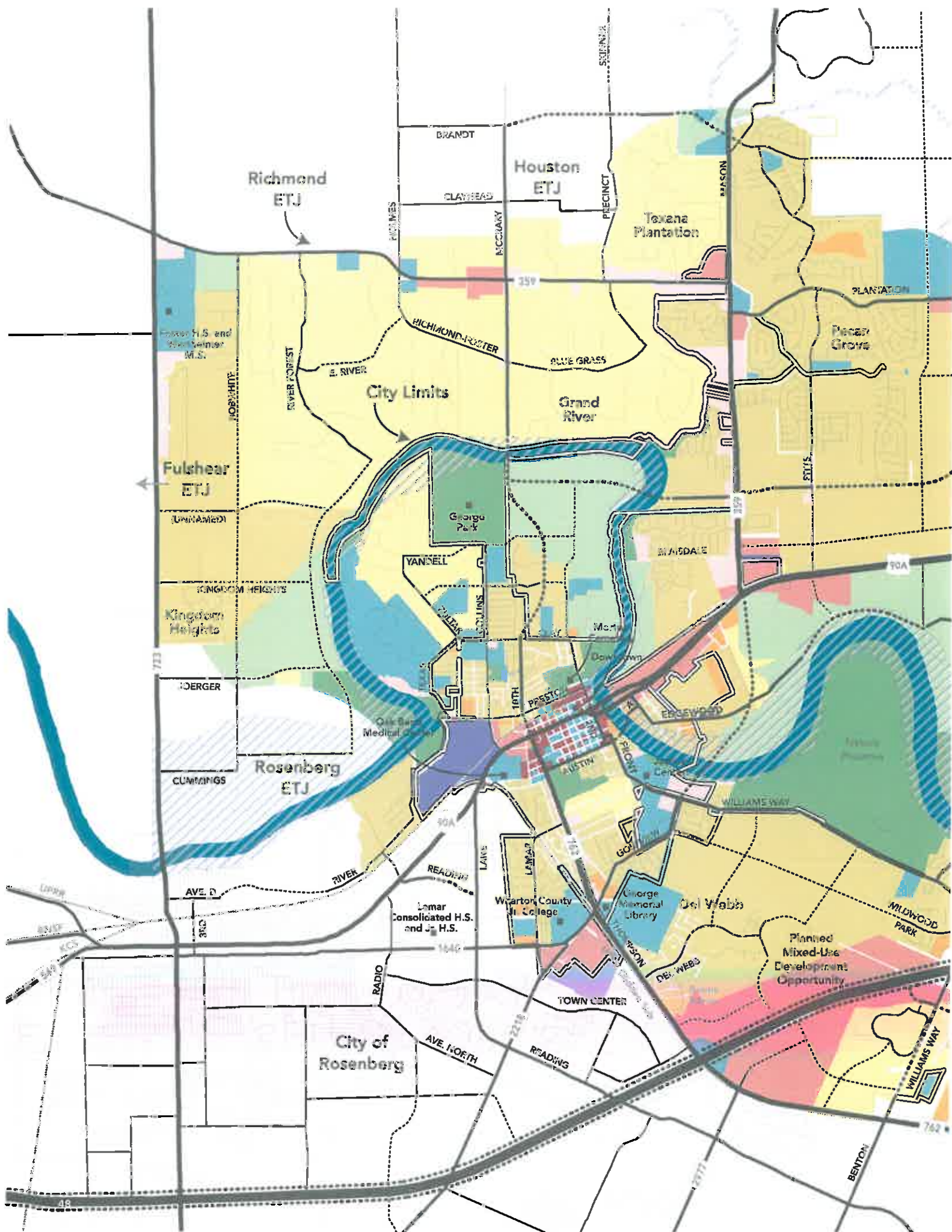
- Basis for applying different land use regulations and development standards in different areas of the community ("zones" or "zoning districts")
- Micro level – site-specific focus

Use

- Regulating development as it is proposed – or as sites are positioned for the future (by the owner or the City) with appropriate zoning

Inputs and Considerations

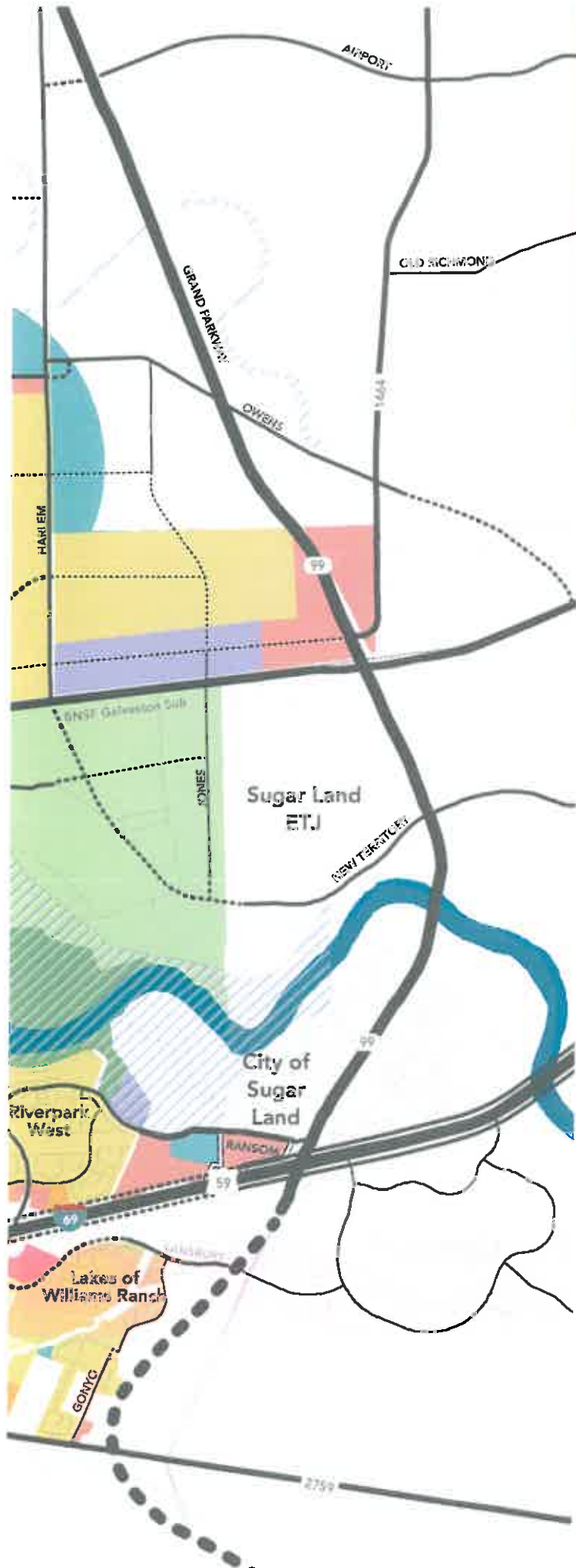
- *Future Land Use Plan*, for general guidance
- Other community objectives (e.g., economic development, redevelopment, resource conservation, etc.)
- Zoning decisions which differ substantially from the general development pattern depicted on the *Future Land Use Plan* should trigger updates to the planning map the next time the *Comprehensive Master Plan* is updated



Map

Future Land Use Plan

This map shall serve as the City's planning blueprint to guide future development and influence land development regulations. If continually reviewed and updated, the *Future Land Use Plan* will adapt to market trends while preserving high-quality development character and promoting unified growth patterns.



-  City Limits
-  Proposed Roads
-  Railroad
-  Floodway
-  Brazos River

Future Land Use

-  Rural
-  Suburban Residential
-  General Residential
-  Multifamily and Manufactured Homes
-  Suburban Corridor
-  General Commercial
-  Historic District
-  Business Park
-  Industrial
-  Parks and Open Space
-  Public and Institutional

A Comprehensive Master Plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.

Land Use Classifications

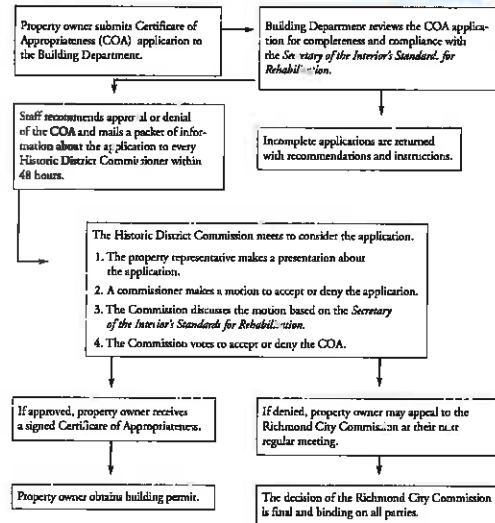
Rural	Rural classifications include agricultural and rural uses warranting protection from premature development or are lands being held for future development. This type of use includes scattered rural homesteads that are independent of subdivisions.
Suburban Residential	Suburban Residential classifications include single-family residential lots that are typically one acre or larger. These types of developments are oftentimes located in semi-rural subdivisions at the periphery of urbanization, although sections of the original City grid have a similar lot size and spacious character. This development type is frequently located near natural or man-made amenities (e.g., water features, scenic vistas, golf courses, greenways). The overall design and lot configuration typically aims to preserve the character of the region's natural amenities.
General Residential	General Residential classifications include single-family detached or attached homes, townhomes, or patio homes. This development type is characterized by less openness and separation between dwellings relative to suburban residential areas.
Multifamily Residential and Manufactured Homes	Multifamily and Manufactured Homes classifications include apartment complexes, senior living facilities, and other higher-density housing types. General residential may also be included in a multifamily area. These developments are generally located along arterials or as transitional uses between commercial and lower-density residential areas, using buffering to reduce the differences in scale or intensity of development. Multifamily developments may include limited office and retail components within master-planned projects.
Suburban Commercial Corridor	Suburban Commercial Corridor classifications include low-impact commercial development (with occasional residential uses) within or at the edge of appropriate neighborhood settings, such as key intersections or subdivision entrances. This type of use may include residential buildings converted to small-scale office or retail spaces along major corridors.
General Commercial	General Commercial classifications include a broad range of retail, restaurant, entertainment, office, institutional, and service uses. Sites and buildings are relatively large in scale and serve the local and regional trade areas. The location and proximity of General Commercial relative to other classifications should be carefully considered; especially to avoid nuisance impacts on nearby residential areas.
Historic District	Historic District classifications retain Richmond's original grid street pattern and reflect a greater diversity of land use types, typically using performance standards to ensure compatible character and scale of residential, commercial, civic/institutional, and vertical mixed uses.
Business Park	Business Park classifications include limited office or light industrial uses, often as part of a master-planned project. They are typically characterized by similar signage and design standards that promote high-quality building and landscaping materials.
Industrial	Industrial classifications include a variety of light and heavy industrial uses, including those with potentially significant impacts to surrounding properties. Special consideration is given to building placement, buffering, screening, and outdoor activity and storage to optimize compatibility with adjacent land uses.
Parks and Open Space	Parks and Open Space classifications include community parks, recreational facilities, cemeteries, and open spaces, as well as conservation areas required by the floodplain and other natural features. Park design, intensity of development, and planned uses/activities should match the character of the surrounding area.
Civic and Institutional	Civic and Institutional classifications include schools, hospitals, places of worship, community organizations, and City-, County-, and State-owned land or buildings that may require sizable tracts of land. Certain publicly owned uses, such as public works facilities, are best located within industrial areas.



Streamlined development review process

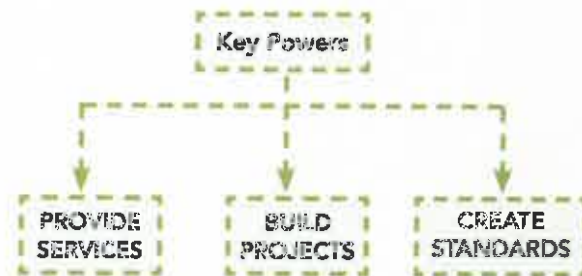
Conduct a thorough review of City intake procedures for development projects, business permits, and fee structures with a view toward adopting more expedited development standards, procedures, and permitting processes. Requires coordination with Fort Bend County for areas within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), West Fort Bend Management District (WFBMD) for areas within the WFBMD boundaries, and Richmond Historic District Commission within the Historic District boundaries.

Certificate of Appropriateness Process for the City of Richmond



West Fort Bend Management District

An important entity facilitating improvements and focusing development to ensure the economic success in the Richmond-Rosenberg area.



The West Fort Bend Management District is focused on enhancing the quality of life for those that live, work, shop, and play in the Richmond-Rosenberg area.

The Management District's mission is to establish an economic climate that encourages sustainable growth and improves the quality of life for the community.

The operating budget of the Management District originates from contributions of Richmond and Rosenberg's Economic Development Councils.

The Management District will continue to play an important role in promoting development along key corridors, such as US 90A.

In 2005, the cities of Richmond and Rosenberg formed the West Fort Bend Management District for the purpose of establishing an economic climate that encourages sustainable growth and improves the quality of life for the community. The district is responsible for administering architectural and landscaping standards and guidelines along major and minor arterials in Richmond, Rosenberg, and their ETJs. The corridor regulations influence site and building designs along US 90A, US 59 / I-69, FM 359, FM 762, and FM 2218. These standards help to elevate the quality and appearance of development along both cities' primary gateways and corridors, which in turn helps to streamline the annexation process by ensuring compatibility between major corridor developments.



Create mixed-use activity centers that serve as community destinations.

Key Recommendations

- Recruitment of high-quality land developers
- Cost-benefit analysis of railroad quiet zones
- Weekend and nightlife programming
- Mixed-use development at major civic destinations
- Strategic corridor planning

Other Considerations

- *Collaborative marketing of Richmond's assets
- *Transit feasibility study to explore local circulator
- *Downtown redevelopment plan
- New financing mechanisms to support redevelopment efforts
- Enhanced streetscape amenities and expanded parking options in Downtown
- Formal expansion of the Richmond Historic District to align with the Future Land Use Plan
- Assistance with conversion of second-story floors in Downtown

Policies

- E.1 Facilitate development of mixed-use growth centers that leverage the community's existing assets with a concentrated mix of market-supported uses: employment, shopping, housing, and entertainment.
- E.2 Continue developing into a full-service community that meets the diverse needs of students, young professionals, families, empty nesters, and retirees.
- E.3 Encourage stronger visual ties and enhanced appearance between the streets, sidewalks, parking, and building facades at community destinations.
- E.4 Encourage convenient multi-modal travel to and in-between Richmond's major activity centers.
- E.5 Promote clustering of future civic and commercial uses, preferably locating them within close proximity to the City's major civic and cultural institutions to the extent possible.
- E.6 Support a wide variety of weekend and nightlife programming hosted in Downtown and at Richmond's major activity centers.
- E.7 Develop and redevelop Downtown to retain its stature as a local and regional destination of history, culture, entertainment, and community gathering.
- E.8 Reinforce an urban character in Downtown, including uses and development standards that observe the building frontages, strong pedestrian streetscape, and on-street versus off-street parking.



"We need to do more to shout our history. Make downtown a centerpiece like no other town. We have culture that no other town has since we are the county seat of Ft Bend."



Del Webb Sweetgrass



BNSF Railroad



Recruitment of high-quality land developers

Partner with major Richmond area landowners to attract high-quality land developers with proven track records at creating premium forms of development. When appropriate, attach higher quality design and landscaping standards to development and redevelopment agreements to support the guiding principles of this plan. The City negotiates these requirements on a case-by-case basis and should be proportional to the scale of investment and in adherence with state law. The appearance of the City is, perhaps, the single most evident glimpse of the effectiveness of the City's development standards. These perceptions of the community are largely driven by the physical environment. For this reason, the quality of development is essential to the community's ongoing and future success. While part of the equation is strengthening the City's land development regulations, the other part is attracting investors willing and able to exceed the minimum standards. Dei Webb Sweetgrass is an excellent example of going above and beyond the subdivision regulations, ranging from the premium treatment of its gateways and landscaping to the elaborate network of internal pedestrian circulation routes.



Cost-benefit analysis of railroad quiet zones

Examine the cost-benefit analysis of railroad "quiet zones," starting in the Downtown area due to the higher density of impacted residents. The City is currently serviced by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway and Union Pacific Railroad. The volume of trains per day is expected to nearly double from 30-40 in 2013 to 60-70 by 2035 for both lines. In 2005, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) required all trains to sound their horns between 96 and 110 decibels at public crossings. Alternatively, cities could establish 'quiet zones' that reduced the noise impact, as regulated by the Train Horn Rule (49 CFR 222). Many communities in the Houston region, such as Sugar Land and Stafford, have implemented quiet zones. Most around the area use wayside horns, which are quieter than typical ones but not silent. These horns are directed at the roadway and require a pre-emption circuit from the railroad. In order for Richmond to implement quiet zone improvements, the following steps are typical of the process:¹

- Selection of pre-approved safety devices: four-quadrant gates, median dividers, and wayside horns;
- Cost estimation using the FRA's Quiet Zone Calculator, an online tool for registered users;
- Coordination with local and federal agencies; and
- Installation of safety improvements and signage.

A Quiet Zone Feasibility Study would identify the necessary costs and prioritization of safety devices at each of Richmond's railroad crossings. Rosenberg estimated implementation of 10 quiet zones would cost \$850,000. This effort requires ongoing partnerships and discussions with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Fort Bend County, Gulf Coast Rail District, BNSF, UPRR, H-GAC, and neighboring jurisdictions.





Weekend and nightlife programming

Incorporate additional weekend and evening community events, like the Fort Bend County Fair Parade or Historic Richmond Car Show, that can bring life to commercial businesses after the typical work week, thereby encouraging a vibrant "after hours" and weekend scene. This type of community buzz, if widely marketed across the Houston-Galveston region, will help to attract students, young professionals, families, empty nesters, and retirees who seek more cultural and community attractions. The City's Downtown streets are designed to accommodate a wide variety of parades and public gatherings, as exhibited by the events occurring throughout the year. Ongoing revitalization of Downtown is more than just a business and government base, but also a cultural center and re-emerging location for both nightlife and weekend activity.

Decker Park



Mixed-use development at major civic destinations

Encourage compact, mixed-use activity centers in Downtown, near the Justice Center, and along the north side of Interstate 69. These destinations are typically characterized as “livable centers,” meaning they are mixed-use, designed to be walkable, and connected and accessible. Downtown serves as the City’s most obvious destination by housing the Historic County Courthouse, City Hall, Police Station, Fort Bend Museum, and a number of longstanding cultural, commercial, and civic amenities. As Richmond looks to the future, it will be necessary to create new livable centers to accommodate different needs and offer geographic diversity. Whether they have a transit-oriented development focus or capitalize on the success of major institutions, such as the Justice Center, the City’s growth in the ETJ and strategic placement of transportation investments indicate the market will support several more. These areas should continue a highly efficient grid pattern, have shorter block lengths to encourage walkability, provide for a number of use types (e.g., commercial, office, civic, residential), and be connected through multiple modes of travel. Fortunately, this type of development pattern decreases the need for parking and also minimizes the costs of utility infrastructure.



Strategic corridor planning

Continue to evaluate Richmond’s key corridors for development potential, such as FM 762, FM 359, Williams Way Boulevard, 10th Street, and Preston Street. These plans would have a similar approach as the recently completed H-GAC 90A Access Management Plan, with the addition of corridor branding such as the “Medical Mile.” One of the primary outcomes of these plans is to coordinate beautification and improvement projects that can correspond with the timing of major infrastructure investments. Additional elements include:

- cursory site analysis, property inventory, and building conditions survey;
- public spaces and activity areas;
- contextual relationships with existing uses and adjacent properties;
- a real estate market overview with summary data on property values, construction costs, and neighborhood demographics;
- a parcel-by-parcel “triage map” depicting sites of high, medium, and low importance for improvements;
- circulation and connectivity to schools, parks, and other destinations;
- an illustrated and annotated conceptual master plan, including typical lot, block, and building footprint considerations to reflect general character and scale;
- design alternatives for key sites; and
- corridor branding, signage, and wayfinding.

Strengthening Activity Centers

The *Fort Bend Subregional Plan* identified four activity centers within the Richmond area. The activity centers include: US 90A/Avenue H Corridor, Downtown Richmond/OakBend Medical Center, Brazos Town Center (overall area), and Great Wood and River Park (overall area). The *Subregional Plan* refers to activity centers as core locations for economic activity and transportation demand, and in many ways locations that establish the character of a community.

City of Richmond



STRATEGIC TOOLBOX:

Tools for Strengthening Activity Centers



Increase mixed development



Encourage industry clusters



Integrate higher density residential



Improve walkability



Increase multi-modal access



Optimize parking strategies



Enhance arts and entertainment



Integrate water, parks, public, and civic space



Case Study: Highway 90A / Avenue H Corridor

Richmond is centered around the US 90A corridor which provides a strong connection from Fort Bend County to the Texas Medical Center and destinations along the existing METRO Main Street light rail line. Retail has already clustered along US 90A in Downtown Richmond, yet there is potential for more focused growth.



STRENGTHS

- ✓ Highly traveled corridor
- ✓ Potential for new restaurants and redevelopment
- ✓ Located between Rosenberg Historic Downtown and Richmond Historic Downtown
- ✓ Part of the West Fort Bend Management District



STRATEGIES



Re-purpose existing buildings and excess parking



Develop potential light industrial clusters



Build higher density multifamily residential



Create a management district overlay to install sidewalk requirements



Design for future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stop



Develop shared parking strategies



Re-purpose excess land to create park space

Source: Fort Bend Subregional Plan



Rehabilitate and preserve Richmond's existing neighborhoods and community assets.

Key Recommendations

- Neighborhood planning and small-scale improvement projects
- Residential street and sidewalk revitalization program
- Coordination of historic preservation guidelines and updated land development regulations

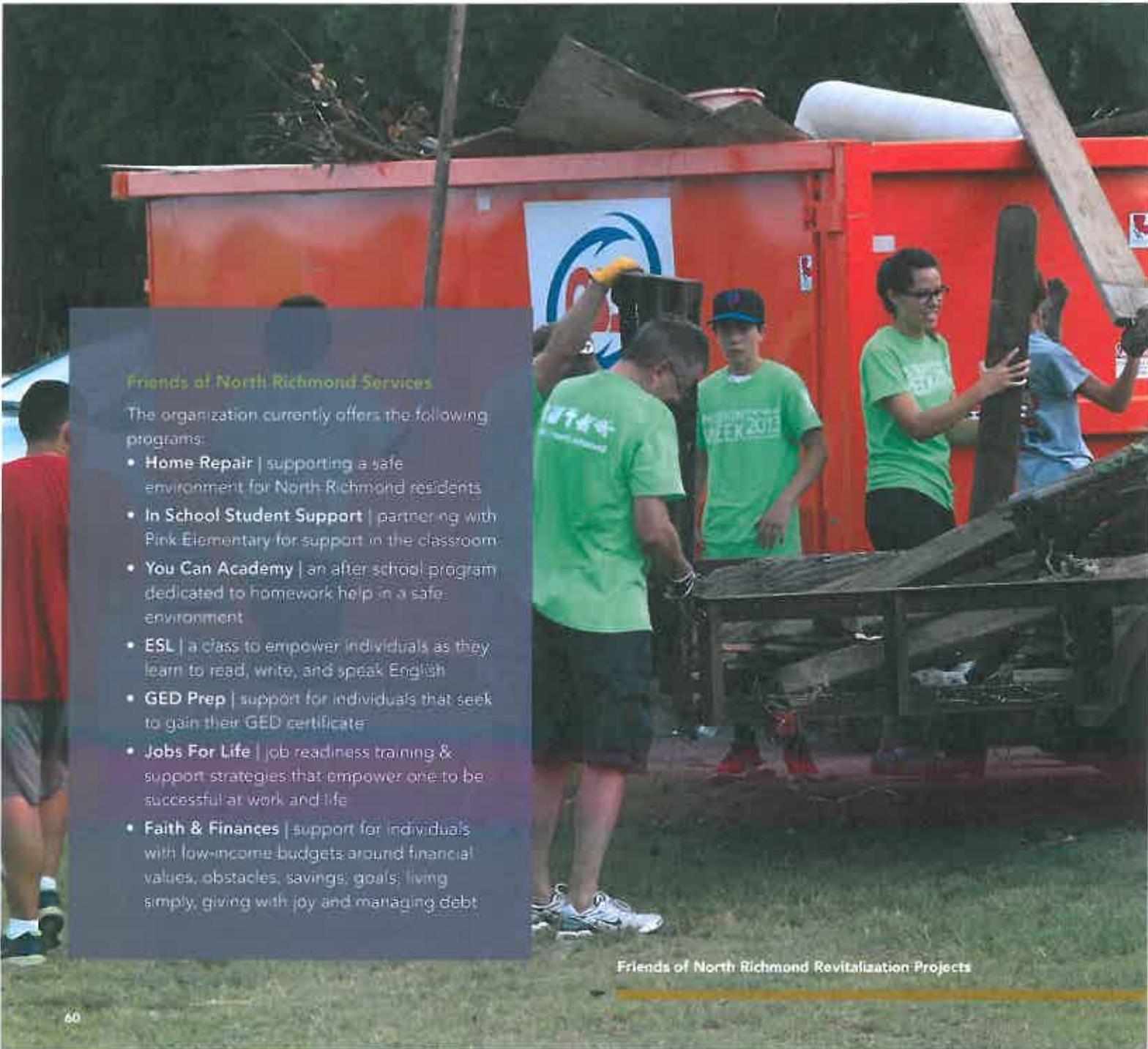
Other Considerations

- Sidewalk, bike lane, and trail planning with rights-of-way protections
- Potential relocation and expansion of the Fort Bend Museum and other historic assets
- Education and outreach for homeowner rehabilitation and financing
- Infill incentives (e.g., fee waivers, tax abatements) and development standards
- Seasonal "Clean Up" events or "Neighborhood Pride" days focusing on beautification
- Partnerships with churches, civic organizations, schools, and businesses in neighborhood improvement and revitalization efforts

Policies

- F.1. Prioritize investment in neighborhood focal points, such as parks, schools, community centers, or small-scale commercial activity, as well as the transportation and utility infrastructure systems that make them functional.
- F.2. Strengthen and empower Richmond's diverse network of public, private, and non-profit partners to provide neighborhood assistance and housing programs.
- F.3. Prioritize redevelopment of blighted properties and infill development of vacant parcels or underutilized tracts over undeveloped land at the periphery of the community, to the extent practical, for the purpose of restoring vitality to existing neighborhoods and optimizing existing infrastructure systems.
- F.4. Celebrate Richmond's historic sites and structures and incorporate such assets into neighborhood design, individual neighborhood and corridor identities, and the community's overall branding.
- F.5. Preserve and restore the integrity of existing neighborhoods and commercial areas to improve resident livability, foster a stronger sense of community, boost the City's image and marketability, and maintain property values.
- F.6. Focus on prioritizing and incrementally improving local streets and sidewalks as a way of strengthening neighborhood pride, safety, and appearance.





Friends of North Richmond Services

The organization currently offers the following programs:

- **Home Repair** | supporting a safe environment for North Richmond residents
- **In School Student Support** | partnering with Pink Elementary for support in the classroom
- **You Can Academy** | an after school program dedicated to homework help in a safe environment
- **ESL** | a class to empower individuals as they learn to read, write, and speak English
- **GED Prep** | support for individuals that seek to gain their GED certificate
- **Jobs For Life** | job readiness training & support strategies that empower one to be successful at work and life
- **Faith & Finances** | support for individuals with low-income budgets around financial values, obstacles, savings, goals, living simply, giving with joy and managing debt

Friends of North Richmond Revitalization Projects



Neighborhood planning and small-scale improvement projects

Consider engaging in small-scale neighborhood planning, starting with the neighborhoods needing the most assistance. These efforts would involve up to three neighborhood meetings per designated planning area; strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats exercises; neighborhood improvements; a list of proposed neighborhood improvement projects; and a cursory list of potential funding streams. The division of neighborhoods could coincide with the proposed pavement management and maintenance program (PMMP) found in this plan. Before initiating the planning process, the City should develop a rubric for prioritizing projects and programs across each plan. Ultimately, this tool will be useful for transferring the planning efforts into the Capital Improvements Program, which will help to set and manage expectations of the City's funding capacity and validate why certain fiscal actions must be taken to realize this plan's goals. Many communities are adopting a "Neighborhoods First"

approach to revitalization.¹ This strategy focuses on small and incremental public investments and beautification projects, such as bike lanes, pedestrian crossings, tree trimmings, park tree plantings, and boulevard tree plantings, rather than major improvements that could not be afforded for every neighborhood. These types of improvements should be recommended through a neighborhood planning process to ensure consistency with the areas' needs and vision. Seven essential principles to this effort should include:²

- Starting with community building
- Fostering leadership
- Planning for implementation
- Taking advantage of the available tools and resources
- Being financially realistic
- Communicating the planning process effectively
- Growing the neighborhoods' social capital

¹ *Strong Towns*

² "Involving the Community in Neighborhood Planning."

Deborah Meyerson. Urban Land Institute. 2004

Neighborhood Resource Center in North Richmond

Friends of North Richmond, a local non-profit organization established in 2009, has leveraged tens of thousands of volunteer hours by more 1,300 individuals to help Richmond residents with education, job readiness, and community revitalization, among many other services. The organization has tutored more than 1,000 students, taught literacy to 75 adults, completed 50+ home repair projects, and conducted three community cleanups within the last three years.

The organization is currently constructing a \$1.044 million, 7,000-square foot Neighborhood Resource Center that will be also be available for other resource providers, such as Fort Bend CORPS. The building is principally funded by churches and individuals, foundations, Development Corporation of Richmond, matching grants, and targeted fundraising campaigns.





Residential street and sidewalk revitalization program

As part of the Capital Improvements Program and in coordination with neighborhood planning efforts, consider adopting a pavement management and maintenance program (PMMP). This would entail a long-range strategy for reconstructing and improving the appearance, function, and safety of the City's existing streets and sidewalks. As part of this effort, it would include neighborhood enhancements such as implementation of traffic calming measures, improved stormwater management practices, and sanitary sewer upgrades that could be incorporated as streets and sidewalks are reconstructed to foster safety among neighborhoods. The purpose would be to restore the traditional street grid pattern to increase neighborhood connectivity, when possible, on new projects. One of the key considerations is to set aside sufficient funds in the Capital Improvements Program over a 10+ year timeframe. The program could be structured with the following considerations:¹

- The City will be divided into 6 to 10 inspection districts with a PMMP condition rating being performed on one district per fiscal year
- Upon completion of all districts, the cycle will repeat.
- Older, most densely populated areas will be inspected first
- Requests for service and exceptions from outside of the designated area will be included as warranted
- The PMMP program provides for more focused inspections and repairs and a more cost effective process due to proximity of repairs

¹ This program is structured similar to the City of Missouri City's pavement management and maintenance program.



Pedestrian connections to George Park are some of the most heavily used trails in Richmond.





Coordination of historic preservation guidelines and updated land development regulations

In coordination with the process of updating and expanding the City's land development regulations, review the City's process and design guidelines for historic preservation. In 2001, the City formed the Richmond Historic District Commission and adopted *A Comprehensive Preservation Plan for the City of Richmond, Texas*, *Design Guidelines for Residential Buildings in the Richmond Historic District*; and *Design Guidelines for Commercial Buildings in the Richmond Historic District*. More than 13 years later, these plans and guidelines warrant an update to ensure the provisions are compatible with the vision for the community, associated property owners, and Richmond Historic District Commission. Furthermore, the boundaries of the Historic District should be revisited to coincide with the Future Land Use Plan and other considerations. Many of the community's preservation end goals may be included in the updated and expanded land development regulations.





Key Recommendations

- Strengthened ties between education and industry
- Downtown redevelopment plan
- Online library of business funding and technical assistance resources
- Increased capacity of business organizations

Other Considerations

- *Collaborative marketing and branding of Richmond's assets
- *Updated land development regulations
- *Transit feasibility study to explore local circulator
- Assistance with conversion of second-story floors in Downtown
- Formation of task force to assess the need for business assistance programs
- "Shop Local" programs
- Quarterly or semi-annual meetings with largest employers to coordinate initiatives



Partner with existing local businesses to assist in their success and improve access to resources.



PENSION ADVISORY GROUP, INC.
EST. 1984
Retirement Plans, Life Insurance
& Annuities

Policies

- G.1. Spearhead public-private partnerships between industry, educational institutions, and governments to facilitate business retention, expansion, and recruitment initiatives.
- G.2. Focus economic development activity on investments and assistance programs that catalyze private-sector activity and/or generate self-sustaining revenue streams.
- G.3. Support the growth and expansion of Richmond's higher education providers (e.g., Wharton County Junior College's Fort Bend Technical Center and Texas State Technical College) through government cooperation, mutual planning, and coordination of infrastructure and public facilities.
- G.4. Work with businesses to identify gaps among county, regional, and state programs, while helping to match those needs with potential resource providers.
- G.5. Increase the capacity of Richmond's existing business organizations and help support new ones that can spearhead marketing, programming, and technical assistance.
- G.6. Support the success and recruitment of medical service providers that accommodate the wide range of Richmond's health and medical needs.



Strengthened ties between education and industry

As a primary workforce development strategy, increase the formality and frequency of dialogue between industry and education through an advisory group. This should occur at the executive level of leadership between relevant City leaders, local foundations, industries, and education providers. The meetings should involve key influencers that are responsible for customizing support services, training programs, and academic curricula. The colleges and social service providers offer essential economic development functions by developing targeted skill sets, recruiting and retaining prospective workforce employees, and supporting innovative business ventures. These conversations already occur on an individual basis, as demonstrated by new training and academic programs provided by Wharton County Junior College and Texas State Technical College. Continuing education programs have been made in partnership with the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Department, Frito Lay, National Oilwell Varco, SouthWest Electronic Energy, and Hudson Products, to name a few. In the past, Del Webb has even partnered with Wharton County Junior College to provide computer classes for its seniors. One key consideration for the advisory group includes potential expansion of the Fort Bend Technical Center campus. Wharton County Junior College and Texas State Technical College are at full capacity with their existing classrooms. They are considering portable buildings as a way to increase enrollment and the number of available classes. This temporary approach to solving space needs conflicts with the Center's larger goal of improving the "college feel" of the campus. Therefore, further discussion and potential partnerships for increasing the campus' footprint are a top priority.

Medical Tourism



Medical tourism is an economic development strategy which involves the travel of people to another place for the purpose of obtaining medical treatment. In addition to high quality medical facilities, medical tourism encourages the development of hotels and other amenities that support patients and their families while they seek medical expertise. Stakeholders in Fort Bend County have voiced their interest in pursuing similar medical tourism, and Richmond is a prime candidate with the presence of OakBend Medical Center.

Primary Care Clinics

Another important medical-related economic development opportunity for Richmond is the creation of new primary care clinics. These clinics serve the population with medical care in important and sometimes more appropriate ways. The George Foundation reports that Richmond's primary care clinics may not be achieving their potential impact mostly due to eligible patients not being aware that a better choice for primary care exists outside of emergency room visits. Dental services are a specific primary care that has been identified as a critical service for which affordable care is currently unavailable in Richmond.

- This uncovers the opportunity for introducing a teaching dental primary care clinic in the area, which will help fill a medical need as well as provide new employment opportunities.

Richmond has the opportunity to introduce a teaching dental clinic in the area to provide both a needed medical service as well as employment.



OakBend Medical Center

The OakBend Medical Center opened on January 15, 1950 as a collaborative effort of Mr. and Mrs. A. P. George with other community-spirited citizens to fulfill the hospital needs in Fort Bend County. When it first opened its doors, there were 51 beds ready to serve those in need. Today, there are 185 beds available for service, and the center has evolved and formed numerous additional departments, including a critical care unit, a skilled nursing unit, an emergency care center, an outpatient facility, a pediatric unit, and a sleep disorders clinic. The facility is proud to offer the only Level III (Advanced) Trauma Center in Fort Bend County.

As Fort Bend County's largest healthcare provider, it also serves as Richmond's third largest employer. Some 660 employees work there, and the center continues to grow. It also now contains two full-service hospital campuses, numerous physician offices, and various specialties.

OakBend provides medical care options for residents in the Richmond area that otherwise cannot afford to seek more expensive medical care elsewhere. Receiving no assistance from the County, OakBend Hospital stays in business through earnings, foundation grants, and some federal funding. To ensure that it stays profitable and continues to provide medical support and employment to the Richmond area, residents must be encouraged to seek medical care at these facilities. An important avenue for sustained economic health of OakBend is medical tourism, which aims to attract patients from other geographic areas (as described on the previous page).

Sandy McGee's



City's 175th Anniversary



Downtown redevelopment plan

The unique development form of Richmond's Downtown warrants a sub-area plan focusing on more customized, highly specific strategies above and beyond those provided by the Comprehensive Master Plan. The special area plan contains a much higher level of design and strategy at the block or site level, providing a directed and nuanced approach toward implementation. These plans include general lot and block arrangements, typical building footprints to reflect general character and scale, public spaces, and contextual relationships with existing uses and adjacent properties. Key considerations may include:

- Physical and economic impact of re-location of Fort Bend County's core services to the Justice Center on Williams Way Boulevard;
- Access management improvements as proposed by the Houston-Galveston Area Council Study;
- Connectivity to Preston Street on the north side, with emphasis on Wessendorff Park and Lake Richmond;
- Vertical mixed-use opportunities with residential on the upper floors;
- Updated Historic District boundaries to coincide with the Future Land Use Plan;
- Implications of a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ), and potential TIRZ boundaries to maximize the increment;
- Potential relocation of City Hall;
- On- and potential off-street parking;
- Railroad crossings and noise impacts;
- Collaborative marketing for businesses and events; and
- Historic preservation.



Online library of business funding and technical assistance resources

In coordination with other marketing and economic development initiatives, consider developing an online library of business funding and technical assistance resources. This would help to improve awareness of the different resources within the community and also help to clarify the mission of each organization. Richmond is fortunate to have a shared-use higher education facility in Richmond, the Fort Bend Technical Center, which houses classes and programs by Wharton County Junior College and Texas State Technical College. Both offer classes for degree-seeking students and professionals pursuing continuing education. However, many ongoing or prospective business professionals are unable to attend traditional day or night classes and rely on the network of public and non-profit service providers, ranging from the County, Small Business Development Center, SCORE business counseling, and many others. Richmond's closest Small Business Development Center, in partnership with the University of Houston and Fort Bend County, is located less than 1,000 feet to the west of the City limits in Rosenberg. Cumulatively, Richmond business professionals have access to a wide range of support services and resources, both locally and within the region.

RECEPTION

In 2001, Wharton County Junior College partnered with Texas State Technical College to open a new Richmond campus, the Fort Bend County Technical Center.

This facility was jointly funded by the George Foundation, the cities of Richmond and Rosenberg, Lamar Consolidated Independent School District, a federal grant, and individual donors. Wharton County Junior College and Texas State Technical College will continue to be strategic partners in the effort to increase the number of college-educated residents, which will inevitably result in new economic development opportunities. Source to Right: US Census

PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS WITH AN ASSOCIATES DEGREE OR HIGHER



**Lowest
Percentage
of College
Graduates**



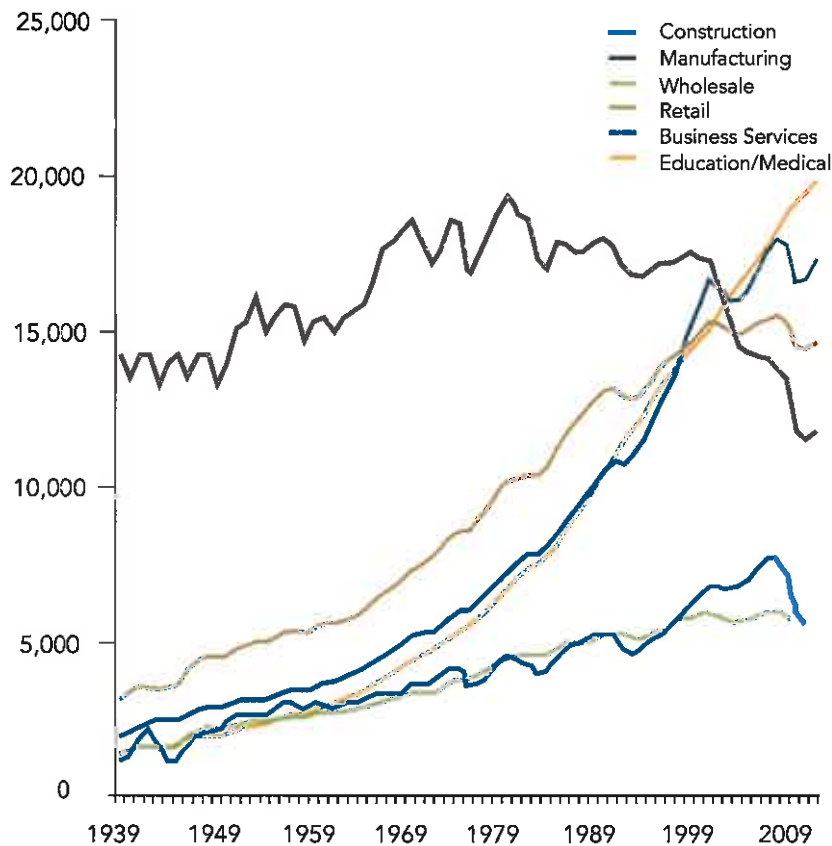
Increased capacity of business organizations

Strengthen the influence, support, and cross-fertilization of Richmond's existing business and economic development entities, such as the Development Corporation of Richmond, Richmond Historic Preservation Commission, Richmond Historic Richmond Association, Central Fort Bend Chamber Alliance, Greater Fort Bend County Economic Development Council, Small Business Development Center (in partnership with the University of Houston and Fort Bend County), etc. As a relatively small community in Fort Bend County, the City has an important facilitation role in helping to match its citizens with applicable resource providers. Under the City's economic development functions, increasing the capacity of business organizations might also include assisting in the formation of additional entities, such as a Main Street organization (under the Texas Main Street Program) or other 501(c)3 non-profit entities that can spearhead grant funding, sponsor and co-sponsor events, and lead collaborative marketing efforts. The community relies on a broad base of community partners to serve all the needs of its citizens and businesses.

Industry Growth Since Great Depression

JOB CREATION BY INDUSTRY SINCE 1939

The chart shows how steeply the “Eds and Meds” sector climbed after the Great Depression, but it also shows that the two industries are beginning to level off, meaning they are nearing the end of a rapid growth cycle.



The “Eds and Meds” Syndrome

The healthcare and education sectors, the so-called “Eds and Meds” industries, have grown rapidly in recent decades, even during the recession’s hardest hitting years. These industries have become essential to the economic success of local governments, especially as America’s aging population continues to seek medical care, and the knowledge economy continues to demand an increasingly skilled and educated workforce. “Eds and Meds,” often represented as a panacea for struggling communities, recently prompted some economists to question the ability of these sectors to continue sustaining local economies. While “Eds and Meds” may constitute a large part of Richmond’s workforce and provide a substantial job base for many cities and regions, economists advise that these sectors cannot be the sole source of employment for any given area.

Diversifying the Local Economy

In recent years, while economies went global, job creation went local. Roughly half of the jobs created between 1990 and 2008 were created in education, healthcare, and government - all of which are locally oriented sectors. What is positive in the recent Eds-Meds growth trend is that growth is occurring and being focused within local economies. Richmond has a great opportunity to capitalize on this trend and support emerging commercial and retail sectors into its current health and government economic portfolio. The sustained health of Richmond’s economy will be dependent on both the diversification of its economic sectors and each sector’s success and resilience. Several activity centers that are primed for the development of commercial and retail opportunities include: US 90A corridor, Downtown, the Justice Center, and the Interstate 69 corridor.



Key Recommendations

- Hotel recruitment
- Shovel-ready business and industrial park
- Business incubator and accelerator program
- Enhanced website design and increased availability of City information

Other Considerations

- *Incremental infrastructure investments that can expand with growth
- *Streamlined development review process
- *Updated land development regulations
- *Strengthened ties between education and industry
- Housing accommodations in support of targeted professions



Downtown Richmond

Policies

- H.1 Provide a competitive set of economic development incentives to attract high-quality developers that have a consistent vision with the community.
- H.2 Engage in focused, proactive business development activities that play to the City's competitive advantages, such as undeveloped interstate frontage, strong base of support for volunteerism and philanthropy, and small town character within reach of big city amenities.
- H.3 Prioritize readiness for business growth by modernizing, enhancing, and incrementally expanding the core utility and transportation infrastructure systems.
- H.4 Hold the community's economic infrastructure systems to the highest standards through advocacy and coordination, ensuring Richmond's schools, telecommunications technology, access to rail freight, and nearby airport facilities are competitive.
- H.5 Focus recruitment efforts on high-paying, quality jobs that help to grow the local economy and improve current residents' quality of life.
- H.6 Offer a variety of housing types, price points, and locations to meet the diverse needs of Richmond's current and prospective employees.
- H.7 Develop a targeted, information-rich marketing strategy that relates to the City's distinguishing assets and target industries.
- H.8 Embrace economic and cultural diversification, which is thriving in Fort Bend County, as the community promotes the growth of Richmond's businesses and neighborhoods.



Diversify Richmond's
business and employer
mix through innovation
and strategic recruitment.



Commercial and Retail Opportunities

Richmond's retail trade area is complemented with a diversified economy; however, it is not reaching its full potential. Retail leakage occurs when actual sales within a retail trade area are less than the area's potential sales. The City recently conducted a retail study to address declining retail with the goal of keeping residents of Richmond and surrounding communities shopping in Richmond to not only maintain but also increase sales tax revenue.

Between 2000 and 2011, Richmond saw a **6.2%** growth in its sales tax per capita rate. This increase equates to more resources for Richmond residents.

Measures of Growth



COMPOUND ANNUAL GROWTH RATE

Compound annual growth rate (CAGR) is a measure of how investments will do given their economic environment. CAGR speaks to the economic strength of an area, and in the case of cities, describes the ability of municipalities to invest back into the community via infrastructure, services, and property tax reductions. In 2011, Richmond showed a positive CAGR of 3.9%, which was comparatively low among Rosenberg (11.4%), Stafford (13.5%), and Sugar Land (40%). Richmond has the opportunity to sustain (or even increase) growth if it can focus key retail within the City limits to fill retail gaps and provide a more secure, diversified local economy. Source: Fort Bend Subregional Plan



SALES TAX GROWTH RATE

Sales tax revenue plays an important role in the City's efforts to fund services and investments, as well as offset property tax rates. Richmond's annual sales tax growth rate from 2000 to 2011 was 6.2% with sales tax per capita growing from \$182/person to \$350/person. This increase in sales tax per capita means that Richmond has more revenue to utilize for each of its residents. Source: Fort Bend Subregional Plan

Retail Growth Opportunities

RETAIL TRADE AREA LEAKAGE (MIL)

The chart below displays Richmond's top seven retail sectors with the largest leakage, and therefore, greatest potential for focused development within the City.



By focusing efforts on increasing retail options within Richmond's trade area, the City has the opportunity to continue increasing its sales tax revenue, and therefore the spending dollars it has for community updates and improvements.



White shading indicates residents voiced a need for these specific retail services during this planning process.



Hotel recruitment

As part of the City's comprehensive economic development approach, hotel recruitment should be a key consideration in diversifying the local economy and increasing local tax revenues. Richmond contains zero hotels in comparison to Rosenberg (13), Stafford (20), Sugar Land (10), Missouri City (3), and Katy (14). Hotels create revenue, provide jobs for those working at the hotel and those working for suppliers to the hotel, and provide a surplus in taxes to the local community. One of Richmond's most obvious disadvantages – relative to many of the other Fort Bend County communities – is its lack of interstate frontage within the City limits. The construction of frontage roads along Interstate 69 / US 59, combined with the City's annexation strategies, will place Richmond in a more favorable position to attract hotels. As part of an overall recruitment effort, the City should consider funding a hotel feasibility study. Key considerations for a feasibility study include: targeted locations; user groups; numbers, types, and sizes of guest rooms appropriate for the market; utilization projections; rate analysis and amenities; and performance of comparable or competitive facilities. The goal of this type of development is to attract more tourists and business travelers to the area, which leads them to maximize their time and money spent in the area. Ongoing roadway and gateway improvements leading up to Downtown (e.g., FM 762 and Williams Way Boulevard) will help steer visitors away from the Brazos Town Center and into Richmond's Downtown. It is incumbent for Richmond to understand how it can differentiate both its hotels and its retail from the other communities along the interstate.



Shovel-ready business and industrial park

Increase the availability of developable business and industrial parks clusters throughout the City limits and ETJ, as illustrated in the Future Land Use Plan. Location of these sites should include:

- Convenient and affordable access to modern utility, transportation, and telecommunications infrastructure;
- Sufficient access and visibility to the region's major thoroughfares;
- Compatible adjoining land uses that can mitigate the noise and traffic impacts (i.e., avoidance of schools, parks, and low-density residential areas); and
- Sufficient buffering between adjoining uses.

For the City to compete effectively, it needs to expand its footprint of business park and industrial sites beyond the major cluster to the north of OakBend Medical Center to areas near the Grand Parkway and to the west of Wal-Mart, for example. Advanced "states of readiness" allow the City to advertise lower site development costs and shorter approval processes. A "shovel ready" site, which is considered the most advanced state of readiness, is typically characterized by complete underground infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, electric, gas) and telecommunications (e.g., voice, T1) services. Increasing Richmond's overall percent of business and industrial parks can be used as a recruitment tool for attracting major employers to the area, which will also attract more residents. One of the primary ways to achieve a compatible quality of business and industrial parks desired by Richmond citizens is to strengthen development regulations to include buildings with enhanced materials and design, common open space, extensive landscaping along the perimeters, special streetscape and design treatments at entries (and other areas), and site operations that are conducted indoors with limited or no outdoor storage or display.



Business incubator and accelerator program


Consider partnering with resource providers, such as the Small Business Development Center, to explore the viability of a business incubator in Downtown Richmond or at the Fort Bend Technical Center. The goal of an incubator program would be to create quality jobs, promote mentorship and networking, improve access to technical and financial resources, and expand the diversity of businesses in Richmond. The advantage of locating one Downtown is that the office space could help to revitalize the business community and draw more foot traffic to Downtown. Once fully operational, some businesses may decide to “graduate” to the City’s proposed business and industrial parks. Within a mid-range period (three to five years), the operation of the incubator should be self-sufficient and ultimately able to repay the City’s loan. As a scaled-down approach, Richmond may desire to initiate an “incubator without walls” program that would offer a social support system paired with affordable technical and administrative assistance to individual businesses located in their respective virtual offices. Once fully established, the “incubator without walls” program could help to launch a centralized resource center operated out of a City-operated building.



Enhanced website design and increased availability of City information

Increase the amount of information and resources available to business prospects, with an emphasis on boosting the City’s website presence. This ranges from development regulations, applications and forms, site selection tools, planning reports and documents, and links to other resource providers. Part of this effort should include partnering with the Greater Fort Bend County Economic Development Council to integrate online site selection resources, to the extent possible. These services quickly match available sites and buildings with prospective business owner needs, whether it is properties for lease or purchase. It is generally estimated that 90 percent of site selection begins on the internet. Therefore, one of the primary advantages of increasing traffic is the ability to monitor who is visiting the City’s site. A variety of website analytics and prospect programs will provide a comprehensive picture of Richmond’s target market by quantifying the number and type of website visitors, what amenities they searched for, and where they are from. The City is currently in the early stages of working with a local business owner to move forward on website development for economic development purposes.





Rabbs Bayou

Key Recommendations

- Low-impact development standards
- Recreational and visual access to the Brazos River
- Enhanced local and regional park system

Other Considerations

- *Joint-funded project initiatives and shared-use facilities
- *Sidewalk, bike lane, and trail planning with rights-of-way protections
- *Landscape beautification and screening investments with major infrastructure projects
- Use of Future Land Use Plan as guideline to protect rural areas and natural amenities
- "Green building" best practice guidelines
- Formation of donor program to enhance park and downtown amenities



Enhance and
preserve
Richmond's
natural
amenities.

Policies

- 1.1 Encourage innovative and flexible development practices that reduce environmental impacts on existing site features (e.g., hydrology, vegetation, soils) while balancing cost implications.
- 1.2 Avoid development or reduce the impacts of development in environmentally sensitive landscapes, including floodplains, wetlands, and riparian buffer areas along the Brazos River, Rabbs Bayou, and their stream channels.
- 1.3 Set aside land for conservation areas, greenbelts, and other open space amenities to encourage healthy lifestyles and to help offset urbanization.
- 1.4 Systematically develop and upgrade the parks and recreation system in coordination with new growth and development patterns.
- 1.5 Encourage multi-functional recreation and drainage amenities that filter and convey storm water while benefiting the community as an open space amenity, such as Lake Richmond.
- 1.6 Strive to increase awareness about Richmond's natural and historic amenities through educational initiatives.

Brazos River

"I think it is appropriate to capitalize on the Brazos River for some sort of recreation venue. I have visited many towns where rivers are adorned with shops, restaurants, parks and trails."





Mirabeau Lamar Homestead Park and Archaeological Reserve



Low-impact development standards

As part of the process of updating and expanding the City's land development regulations, consider including low-impact development (LID) strategies. LID is an approach to land development that uses various land planning and design practices and technologies to simultaneously conserve and protect natural water resource systems and reduce infrastructure costs. LID still allows land to be developed, but in a cost-effective manner that helps mitigate potential environmental impacts. For example, site plans should be developed that keep water from running off the land too quickly and instead allow the water to soak back into the earth and replenish the groundwater table or aquifer. Reducing the quantity and velocity of water run-off minimizes soil erosion and loss of land. Site plans should employ strategies and techniques that protect the quality of water that flows into lakes, streams, and wetlands or recharges groundwater supplies. LID stormwater management best practices should be implemented within public rights-of-way, particularly along roadsides and in parking lots, where soils and other conditions will allow. LID processes for systematically managing stormwater include 'chains' or natural treatment methods of filtration, infiltration, storage, and ultimately reuse. In appropriate locations where increased open space is desired or needed to preserve resource features (e.g., wetlands, tree stands, drainage channels) or to protect compatibility between adjacent developments, consider allowing flexible site design and LID options that permit alternative treatment of utilities and infrastructure. There can be significant cost savings to development from flexible site design and cluster development techniques, which translate into reduced lot and house prices (e.g., reduced linear feet of street, pipe, sidewalk; fewer street lights and fire hydrants; reduced stormwater management needs; etc.).



Recreational and visual access to the Brazos River



The *Brazos River Master Plan (2014)* identified three canoe launches within the immediate Richmond vicinity (identified as green triangles on the map).

Coordinate with regional partners to increase recreational and visual access to the Brazos River. This natural amenity is one of the "key differentiators" that makes Richmond unique. In 2014, Fort Bend Green developed a *Brazos River Master Plan* for the purpose of furthering this initiative. One survey respondent said, "Having this for use as a trail and natural area will greatly increase the value of my home and quality of my life. If done properly this is a Win Win... Sooner the better as far as I'm concerned." The survey identified the top two priorities as: trails that follow along the river and canoe/kayak launches. The City should continue working with regional partners, including government agencies, municipal utility districts, and private landowners, to be included in these efforts so Richmond is an integral connection within this regional waterway network.





Enhanced local and regional park system

Update the *Parks Master Plan* to review progress and revisit priorities, including the most recent parks and recreation additions (e.g., Wessendorff Park, potential Lake Richmond) and population projections within the City and ETJ. As part of the overall update process, include a *Trails Master Plan* to include current and proposed paths (sidewalks, bike lanes, multi-use trails) that will improve Richmond's connectivity to the region. This requires coordination with Central Fort Bend Chamber Alliance, Fort Bend County, Fort Bend Green, Houston Wilderness, Houston-Galveston Area Council, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and others as appropriate. The primary objectives of the Trails Master Plan process are to:

- Identify relevant trail needs by soliciting public input through various engagement formats;
- Inventory the existing conditions of the City's and extraterritorial jurisdiction's (ETJ's) trails, sidewalks, and crosswalks;
- Recommend proposed trail alignments and associated trail and trailhead amenities to enhance the trail system's safety, connectivity, accessibility, and convenience and thereby ensure the system is well utilized; and
- Propose a multi-faceted implementation strategy for accomplishing a city-wide trails network through both public expenditures and private funding and land dedications, and with ongoing financing for adequate maintenance.



Proposed Lake
Richmond Project

Wessendorff Park-Phase II will incorporate a trail that allows access to historic Morton Cemetery.





Wessendorff Park

Key Recommendations


- Collaborative marketing and branding of Richmond's assets
- Intergovernmental advocacy and coordination
- Public investments at Richmond's key community gateways

Other Considerations

- *Enhanced website design and increased availability of City information
- *Recruitment of high-quality land developers
- *Weekend and nightlife programming
- Comprehensive wayfinding study
- Historic architecture as unique regional asset for arts and entertainment district



Strengthen the awareness and image of the community throughout the region.



Policies

- J.1 Facilitate collaborative marketing initiatives with the community's major institutions and foundations to tell Richmond's story of historic significance, rich community life, and economic prosperity.
- J.2 Strengthen local businesses with promotional and networking resources to broadcast their services and products to a much wider audience and referral network than a Richmond-centric campaign can achieve by itself.
- J.3 Invest in community attractions that celebrate Richmond's "key differentiators" from the rest of the Houston-Galveston region to attract more residents, businesses, and tourists to the area.
- J.4 Increase the amount of readily available information on the City's website.
- J.5 Encourage City officials and staff to engage in regional planning and economic development initiatives through networking, advocacy, and volunteerism on advisory boards and committees.
- J.6 Stay informed of regional, state, and federal funding streams to maximize the community's financial and political capital.
- J.7 Prioritize community enhancements and encourage higher quality standards along Richmond's most visible and heavily used gateways, corridors, and districts.

Lamar Consolidated ISD is the seventh high growth district in the Houston area. Developers choose to build in this area due to the district's high median income level, relatively low economically disadvantaged population level, and the availability of land.



George Ranch High School Longhorns

Lamar Consolidated Independent School District

In regards to education standings, Lamar Consolidated ISD is moving up to the top of the list of school districts in Texas. Lamar Consolidated ISD was the largest school district in the Houston area to meet the Federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind law, and 80.1 percent of students in the district passed the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exam in the 2012-2013 school year.

Thanks to the local George Foundation partnership with Memorial Hermann hospitals, the Memorial Hermann Health Center for Schools opened in August 2002 on the Lamar High School campus to provide health services to students without health insurance or other financial resources. In January 2012, another healthcare facility known as the Red Zone opened up to provide free healthcare to students attending Beasley Elementary, Bowie Elementary, Taylor-Ray Elementary, Travis Elementary, Meyer Elementary, Navarro Middle School, George Junior High, and B.F. Terry High School.



Collaborative marketing and branding of Richmond's assets

Increase the City's awareness and positive image through intergovernmental, institutional, and public-private communication channels. As part of this effort, the City should partner with a public relations and marketing firm to implement a strategic marketing and community relations strategy with a multi-year budget. This initiative may entail:

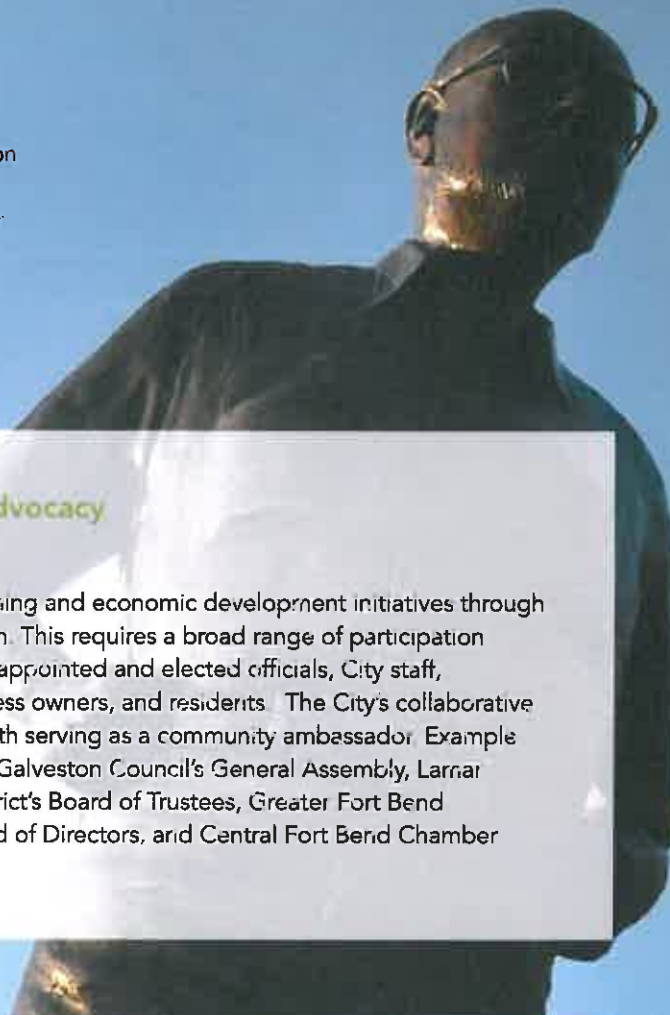
- Developing a branding and wayfinding strategy with a short-, mid-, and long-range action plan.
- Determining the most cost-effective platforms for marketing: website development, brand ads, billboards and signage, housing 'welcome' packages, and other associated collateral.
- Guiding and assisting City staff and elected officials with training on media relations, social media, and community outreach.
- Partnering with the City's Economic Development Director to identify target markets within and outside of Fort Bend County and the Houston-Galveston region to cross-promote community attractions and events.

Potential Campaigns

- Special places through the community (e.g., Downtown, Justice Center, Fort Bend Museum, and Historic Landmarks)
- Targeted industries
- OakBend Medical Center and other medical services
- Wharton County Junior College and Texas State Technical College
- Lamar Consolidated Independent School District
- Community events/attractions
- "Shop Local" programs

Target Audiences

- Prospective businesses interested in locating in Richmond, or partnering with Richmond businesses
- Prospective homeowners or business owners located throughout metropolitan area and potentially re-locating to Richmond
- Existing residents and businesses considering relocation
- Tourists that might attend community events, attractions, or restaurant and service accommodations
- Realtors
- Local, regional, state, and federal elected officials that could assist with Richmond initiatives
- Newspaper, radio, television, and social media outlets

A large, dark bronze statue of a man with glasses, wearing a suit and tie, stands against a clear blue sky. The statue is positioned in the upper right portion of the page, with its head tilted slightly to the right. The background shows some green foliage on the left and right edges.

The Henderson-Wessendorff Foundation is currently working on a walkway under the railroad track near the Hilmar Moore statue to allow safe passage to Decker Park, Wessendorff Park, Morton Cemetery, and other potential destinations.



Intergovernmental advocacy and coordination

Continue volunteering in regional planning and economic development initiatives through networking, advocacy, and volunteerism. This requires a broad range of participation from community leaders, ranging from appointed and elected officials, City staff, community organization leaders, business owners, and residents. The City's collaborative marketing efforts work hand-in-hand with serving as a community ambassador. Example efforts include serving on the Houston-Galveston Council's General Assembly, Larrar Consolidated Independent School District's Board of Trustees, Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council's Board of Directors, and Central Fort Bend Chamber Alliance's Board of Directors.



Public investments at Richmond's key community gateways

Prioritize gateway improvements and include them in the City's Capital Improvements Program. Corridors are major transportation routes consisting of highways, principal arterial streets, and transit routes that provide access into and out of the City, act as travel ways connecting centers, both locally and regionally, and/or support high levels of transit service. In the effort to improve Richmond's visibility in the region, one strategy is to better define Richmond's major gateways and borders – both at the periphery but also within sub-areas of the community. These types of improvements include high-profile monuments (like the new one at US 90A), landscaping, streetscaping treatments, flags and banners, ornamental lighting, land contouring, public art, paving material, and pedestrian/bikeway trails. Coordination with the Texas Department of Transportation will be required along designated state and federal highways. The gateway improvements should be carefully sited and of sufficient scale and quality design to stand out from other corridor signage and visual elements. The traffic counts on the Thoroughfare Plan indicate the highest priority corridors – as well as emerging corridors, such as the Williams Way Boulevard entrance to the Justice Center.

Hilmar Moore Statue

Acknowledgments

City Commission

Evelyn Moore, Mayor
 Glen Gilmore, City Commissioner
 Jesse Torres, City Commissioner
 Bill Dostal, Former City Commissioner
 Gary Gillen, Former City Commissioner

Planning and Zoning Commission

Bill Dostal
 Ernie Hogue
 Josh Lockhart
 Don Murrell
 Joe D. Robinson

Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

Barry Beard
 Ann Council
 Carlos Garcia
 Lupe Garza
 Bobby Greenwood
 Rob Hodge
 Ernie Hogue
 Rosie Karlberg
 Marie Kirkham
 Marvin Kristynik
 Josh Lockhart
 Lonnie Meadows
 Pat Pittman
 Joe Robinson
 Dave Scott
 Manual Zamora
 Bert Bleil (in memory of)

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 Garren Schmidt, Water Superintendent
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 Frances Kellerman, Associate Planner
 Laura Walker, Associate Planner

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 Fort Bend Museum Association



